

Referencing

What is referencing?

Academic writing relies on more than just the ideas and experience of the writer. It also uses the ideas and research of other sources: books, journal articles, websites, and so forth. These other sources may be discussed, critiqued or analysed, or used to support the writer's ideas. Referencing tells the reader where ideas from other sources have been used in an assignment.

There are many reasons why it is important to reference sources correctly. Referencing

- shows the reader that you can find and use sources to create a solid argument.
- credits the originators of ideas, theories, and research findings.
- shows you have read widely and understand what you have read.
- follows the conventions of academic writing.

Failure to properly acknowledge sources is called plagiarism, and it can carry significant academic penalties. Fortunately, plagiarism is easy to avoid by following a few basic principles.

What needs to be referenced?

Whenever an assignment uses words, facts, ideas, theories, or interpretations from other sources, that source must be referenced. Referencing is need when:

- You have copied words from a book, article, or other source exactly (quotation).
- You have used an idea or fact from an outside source, even if you haven't used their exact wording (paraphrasing and summarising).

The only exception to this is when the information is common knowledge, which is something that anyone is likely to know. A good tip is to ask yourself if the information is widely known, and if the fact is disputed by anyone. If you are uncertain whether to reference something or not, it is better to reference it.

Referencing styles

There are several different styles of referencing, although the most common style used at Massey University is APA. Check your assignment instructions or study guide for which style you need to use:

- APA
- MLA
- Oxford
- Harvard
- Chicago

Each style has its own rules for properly citing sources:

- Author-date styles (e.g., APA, MLA and Harvard) put the author's name inside the text of the assignment.

- Documentary-note styles (e.g., Chicago and Oxford) put the author's name in a footnote at the bottom of each page, or in an endnote at the end of the assignment.

Plagiarism anxiety

Plagiarism occurs when information from another source is used without being credited correctly. This source can be a book, a journal article, or a website- anything that was written by someone else. There are several common mistakes that can lead to plagiarism:

- Copying words without telling the reader where those words came from.
- Copying words without putting them inside quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing (rephrasing) another source, but only changing a few words.
- Using the facts or ideas from another source without telling the reader where they came from.

Many new students worry about accidentally plagiarising. This is perfectly natural! The rules of referencing are complex and intimidating at first. Academic study involves a lot of reading, and it can be difficult to keep track of the sources of ideas. However, it is actually very difficult to plagiarise accidentally if you:

- Follow the guidelines on this page and plagiarism will be easily avoided.
- Keep clear notes, including page numbers, when reading for an assignment.
- Err on the side of caution and reference information (even if you are unsure that a reference is needed).
- Ask your lecturer/course coordinator or pose a question on Stream if you have any doubts.

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is easy to avoid, by applying two simple rules:

- If you copy more than about three consecutive words from a source, put the words in quotation marks.
- If you use any words, ideas, opinions, or information from a source, cite and reference the source.

Turnitin

Before you submit your assignment for marking, you must submit it to [Turnitin](#), which generates a report about how much of your assignment is found in other sources. This can give you an idea of places you may need to reference or passages you might want to paraphrase or summarise. Information about Turnitin can be found on [OWLL](#).

Academic writing and study skills support

1. Academic Q+A

If you have a quick question about study skills or academic writing, then they can ask it on the [Academic Q+A forum](#), which can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

2. Consultations

One-to-one consultations with learning advisors and writing consultants are [available online and on campus](#). Consultants can answer your questions about academic writing and study skills or give you feedback on your assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, presentation, use of sources, and referencing.

3. Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL)

Develop your academic writing and study skills with the [Online Writing and Learning Link \(OWLL\)](#) website from Massey University. OWLL includes information on assignment writing, assignment types, referencing, study skills, and exam skills.

4. Pre-reading Service

The [Pre-reading Service](#) is a free service, which gives students an opportunity to send their draft assignment to [CLS consultants](#) for review and advice. Students receive individual written feedback on their assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, style, presentation, referencing, and use of sources. The service can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

5. Workshops

Free study seminars and workshops are run on campus and online. See [Workshops page on OWLL](#) for [programmes and registration details](#).