

UTS:HELPS

HIGHER EDUCATION LANGUAGE AND PRESENTATION SUPPORT

REPORTING VERBS AND YOUR 'WRITER'S' VOICE

Reporting verbs tell us that someone said something. However, careful selection of reporting verbs can help show your assessment of the quality of what they have said. This is a vital academic skill.

Reporting verbs can show your opinion of others' ideas including:

- a belief that the literature is correct (stronger position)
- a neutral attitude towards the veracity of the literature (i.e. neither correct nor incorrect – neutral position)
- a belief that the literature is incorrect (weaker position)

Common reporting verbs for academic writing

It is important you understand and know how to use the verb correctly before placing it in a sentence and that you use past or present tense as appropriate. Here is a list of possible reporting verbs which you can use to indicate your viewpoint:

	weaker position	neutral position	stronger position
addition		adds	
advice		advises	
agreement	admits, concedes	accepts, acknowledges, agrees, concurs, confirms, recognises	applauds, congratulates, extols, praises, supports
argument/ persuasion	apologises	assures, encourages, interprets, justifies, reasons	alerts, argues, boasts, contends, convinces, emphasises, exhorts, forbids, insists, proves, promises, persuades, threatens, warns
believing	guesses, hopes, imagines	believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks	asserts, guarantees, insists, upholds
conclusion		concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realises	
disagreement/ questioning	doubts, questions	challenges, debates, disagrees, questions, requests, wonders	accuses, attacks, complains, contradicts, criticises, denies, discards, disclaims, discounts, dismisses, disputes, disregards, negates, objects to, opposes, refutes, rejects
discussion	comments	discusses, explores	reasons

emphasis			accentuates, emphasises, highlights, stresses, underscores, warns
evaluation/ examination		analyses, appraises, assesses, compares considers, contrasts, critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands	blames, complains, ignores, scrutinises, warns
explanation		articulates, clarifies, explains	
presentation	confuses	comments, defines, describes, estimates, forgets, identifies, illustrates, implies, informs, instructs, lists, mentions, notes, observes, outlines, points out, presents, remarks, reminds, reports, restates, reveals, shows, states, studies, tells, uses	announces, promises
suggestion	alleges, intimates, speculates	advises, advocates, hypothesises, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorises	asserts, recommends, urges

The grammar of reporting verbs

Pattern 1: Verb + Noun (noun phrase)

The authors **show** *the devastating results of this policy* (Smith & Jones 2008, p. 12).

Gillard (2012) **indicated** *her negative opinion of Abbott's proposal*.

Pinker (2002) frequently **approves of** *Chomsky's theories*.

Pattern 2: Verb + That + clause (i.e. sentence)

The authors **show that** *this policy had devastating results* (Smith & Jones 2008, p. 12).

Gillard (2012) **indicated that** *Abbott's proposal was untenable in her opinion*.

Tense

Reporting verbs are normally present simple – especially for recent articles and books:

Turner (2010) **states** *that the modern state wields more power in new ways*.

However, use the past tense if presenting the results of past research – even in recent literature:

The groups **observed** *during the research* **showed** *a range of leadership styles* (Kang 2006).

Sources

Office of Student Success 2010, *Reporting verbs*, Australian Catholic University, viewed 17 October 2012, <http://students.acu.edu.au/office_of_student_success/academic_skills_unit_asu/academic_referencing/reporting_verbs/>.

Writing Centre 2009, *Common reporting verbs for academic writing*, University of Adelaide, viewed 25 October 2012, <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/learning_guides/learningGuide_reportingVerbs.pdf>.