

# Reporting Verbs

In academic writing, you will often need to refer to the research of others, also called secondary sources. When discussing other people's work, a reporting verb can be used to great effect. The difficulty with using them, however, is that there are many and each of them has slightly different and often subtle meanings.

## Introduction

In academic writing, it is important to present an argument logically and cohesively. You may be required to report on, evaluate and discuss existing research or ideas. Often you will be assessed on your ability to demonstrate these skills.

It is repetitive and boring to write 'Smith says...' over and over again. Fortunately, there is a wide choice of reporting verbs in English. Reporting verbs can indicate either (a) the author's personal viewpoint, (b) your viewpoint regarding what the author says, and/or (c) the author's viewpoint regarding other literature.

To interpret the writer's ideas accurately, however, you will need to use a verb with the correct nuance (sense of meaning). Use an English dictionary to check that you have the right verb for the right context.

## Reasons for using reporting verbs

There are many reasons for using a reporting verb. You may want to comment on someone's work, agree or disagree with someone else's study, or evaluate someone's ideas. There are three basic reasons for using a reporting verb. Its usage depends largely on whether you are focusing on the:

- Aim of the study
- Results of the study
- Opinion of the study

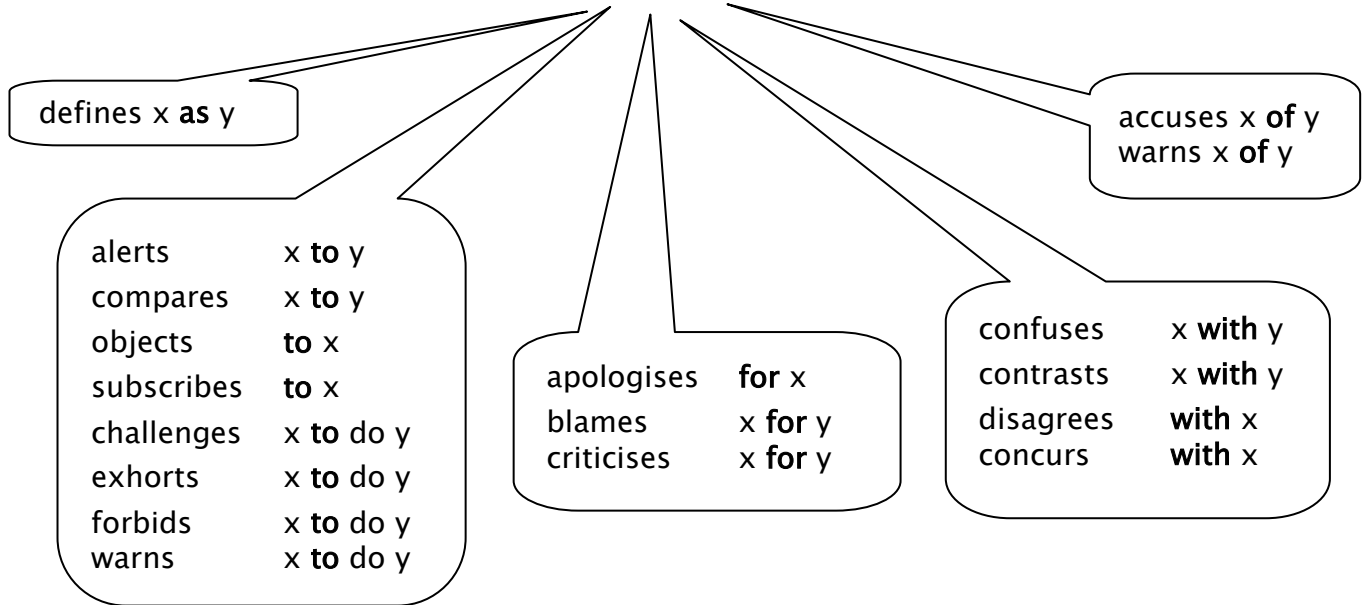
Some verbs are weaker in their function, while others are strong. Some verbs are followed by a preposition (e.g. as, to, for, with, of), while others are followed by a noun or 'that' (see page 3). In addition, some verbs can fit more than one category e.g. *warns* can be used to disagree with, emphasise or examine an idea.

## Function and strength of reporting verbs

Below is a list of commonly used reporting verbs in formal academic writing, but indeed there are many more. 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.

	Weaker position	Neutral position	Stronger position
<b>Addition</b>		adds	
<b>Advice</b>		advises	
<b>Agreement</b>	admits, concedes	accepts, acknowledges, agrees, concurs, confirms, recognises	applauds, congratulates, extols, praises, supports
<b>Argument and persuasion</b>	apologises	assures, encourages, interprets, justifies, reasons	alerts, argues, boasts, contends, convinces, emphasises, exhorts, forbids, insists, proves, promises, persuades, threatens, warns
<b>Believing</b>	guesses, hopes, imagines	believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks	asserts, guarantees, insists, upholds
<b>Conclusion</b>		concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realises	
<b>Description</b>	confuses		
<b>Disagreement and questioning</b>	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
<b>Discussion</b>	comments	discusses, explores	reasons
<b>Emphasis</b>			accentuates, emphasises, highlights, stresses, underscores, warns
<b>Evaluation and Examination</b>		analyses, appraises, assesses, compares considers, contrasts, critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands	blames, complains, ignores, scrutinises, warns
<b>Explanation</b>		articulates, clarifies, explains	
<b>Presentation</b>	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
<b>Suggestion</b>	alleges, intimates, speculates	advises, advocates, hypothesises, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorises	asserts, recommends, urges

## Verbs followed by a preposition



## Verbs followed by a noun or -ing form

analyses, applauds, appraises, assesses, attacks, considers, contradicts, critiques, debates, describes, discards, disclaims, discounts, discusses, dismisses, disregards, evaluates, examines, explores, expresses, extols, forbids, highlights, identifies, ignores, illustrates, investigates, justifies, lists, opposes, outlines, praises, presents, questions, refutes, rejects, restates, scrutinises, studies, supports, underscores, uses, validates, verifies

## Verbs followed by 'that'

accepts, acknowledges, adds, admits, advises, advocates, agrees, alerts, alleges, announces, argues, articulates, asserts, assures, believes, boasts, claims, clarifies, comments, complains, concedes, concludes, confirms, feels, finds, forgets, guarantees, guesses, hopes, hypothesises, imagines, implies, indicates, infers, informs, insists, justifies, knows, maintains, notes, observes, persuades, points out, posits, postulates, promises, proposes, proves, questions, realises, reasons, recognises, recommends, remarks, reminds, reports, reveals, shows, speculates, states, stresses, suggests, suspects, tells, theorises, thinks, understands, urges, warns

## Example sentences

Remember that the tense you use for your reporting verb will depend on your style guide. Some styles prefer present tense while others prefer past tense.

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Boynton (1982, p. 79) **warns** the reader **that** ordinary chocolate is “too frail to withstand heat, moisture and proximity to baked beans”.

Hanks (2004, p. 257) **defines** an idiom **as** an expression whose “meaning . . . is distinct from the sum of its parts”.

Smith (2005) **disagrees with** Fry (2003) when she **maintains that** many students have trouble with reporting verbs.

Some people **subscribe to** the idea that chocolate is unhealthy, but Boynton’s (1982) book **refutes** this claim.

This paper **investigates** the effects of alcohol on memory and **stresses that** further research be done as a matter of urgency.

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## References

- Boynton, S. (1982). *Chocolate: The consuming passion*. London: Methuen.  
Hanks, P. (2004). The syntagmatics of metaphor and idiom. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 17(3), 245–274.

## Useful resources

### Websites

- <http://academicenglishcafe.com/ReportedandQuotedSpeechVerbs.aspx>  
<http://tls.vu.edu.au/SLS/slu/ReadingWriting/Referencing/ReportingVerbs/ReportingVerbs.htm>  
<http://www.edufind.com/english/grammar/rep7.cfm>  
[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/learning\\_english/activities/aez/resources/reporting\\_verbs/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/learning_english/activities/aez/resources/reporting_verbs/)

### Printables

- [http://www.awc.metu.edu.tr/handouts/Verbs\\_to\\_Introduce\\_Paraphrases\\_and\\_Quotations.pdf](http://www.awc.metu.edu.tr/handouts/Verbs_to_Introduce_Paraphrases_and_Quotations.pdf)  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/lasesl/assets/downloads/verbs-message.pdf>  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/learning/assets/downloads/Referencing-phrases.doc>  
<http://www.york.ac.uk/k-roy/pdfs/Reporting%20Verbs%20functions.pdf>

If you require more assistance with Reporting Verbs, please contact Academic Learning and Language on 8303 5771.

Visit the ALL website for additional resources: [www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/all/](http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/all/)

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