



Your introductory  
guide to citing, referencing  
and academic writing at QUT.  
[www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au)

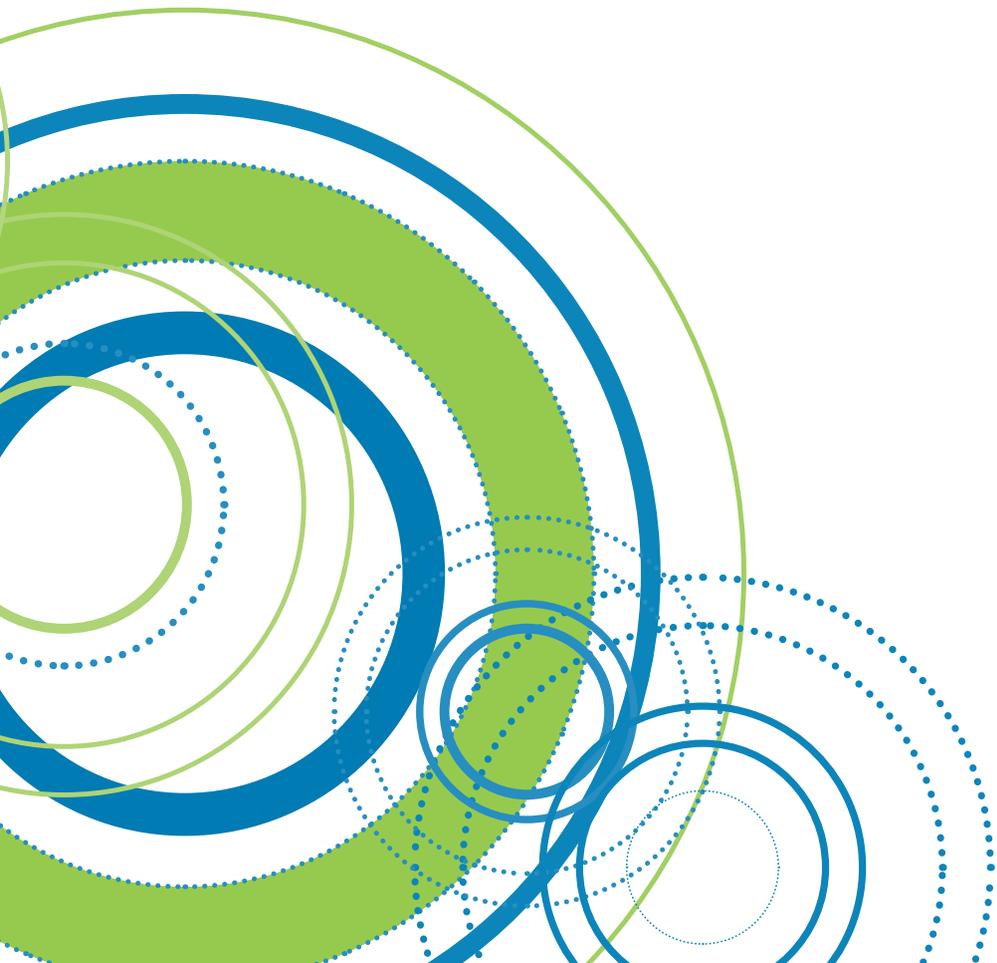
# cite | write





## **cite | write**

is a general  
introduction to citing,  
referencing and  
academic writing.





Find specific  
examples for QUT  
referencing styles at:  
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**cite**

# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part 1: Referencing and citation</b>	<b>3</b>
Citation: acknowledging someone else's work	3
Referencing: providing details about your sources	3
Avoiding plagiarism	3
<b>Part 2: In-text citations</b>	<b>4</b>
What should be cited in your writing?	4
Citation using an author-date style	4
Citation using a numbered style	5
Direct quotations: copying words exactly	6
Indirect quotations/paraphrases: rewriting the original words	7
Summaries: referring to the source/author's main ideas	8
<b>Part 3: Reference lists</b>	<b>9</b>
Referencing books	9
Referencing a book chapter	10
Referencing journal articles	10
<b>QUT's recommended reference styles</b>	<b>11</b>
Author-date styles	11
Numbered style	12
Legal styles	12

# Part 1: Referencing and citation

When studying at university it is essential to acknowledge words or information you have ‘taken’ — or *cited* — from another source such as books, websites, newspapers, journals, DVDs, etc.

In most disciplines, you will need to include **two key elements** in your writing:

1. **In-text citation:** to acknowledge the author or source of information you are using, within your assignment (see *Part 2*).
2. **Reference lists:** to provide full details of the authors and sources in a list format, at the end of your assignment (see *Part 3*).

*Note:* Some disciplines, such as Law, may require a different system.

## Citation: acknowledging someone else’s work

Citation or citing is when you use information or words written by someone else in your work to support your argument or illustrate your point.

You need to cite when you:

- use a *direct* quote from someone else
- give a *summary* of someone else’s ideas
- *paraphrase* someone else’s ideas
- copy some information (such as a picture, a table or some statistics).

## Referencing: providing details about your sources

Referencing is when you give *bibliographic information* — details such as author’s family name and the date and title of publication — about the sources you used in your work.

You need to reference in order to:

- support your ideas and arguments using expert facts or ideas
- acknowledge (to give credit for) facts and ideas you have used
- help other readers find the original facts and ideas — or ‘works’ — that you have used
- avoid plagiarism.

It is also an opportunity to show readers the depth and quality of your reading and research.

## Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you do not give credit to the author/s for information used in your own work.

This means not citing or referencing when:

- copying the work of another student
- directly copying or buying any part of another author’s work
- paraphrasing or summarising someone else’s ideas
- directly copying and pasting information from the Internet
- using the idea or thesis from someone else’s work
- using experimental results from someone else’s work.

Plagiarism is easy to avoid if you cite and reference correctly. However, plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, which incurs severe penalties at QUT.



### Did you know?

You can become familiar with your responsibilities by reading QUT’s policy on plagiarism (c/9.3 Procedures for academic dishonesty) at [www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C\\_09\\_03.jsp](http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C_09_03.jsp)

# Part 2: In-text citations

## What should be cited in your writing?

Some students think citations only need to be included when they are directly quoting someone. This is *not true*. **All material** of an informative nature (i.e. information you used from your reading) **should be acknowledged**.

This means that any information (words, ideas, statistics, tables, data, pictures, photos, etc.) obtained from another author or source requires an in-text citation, whether it is used in a direct quotation or as a paraphrase.

Common knowledge, such as the symbol for water (H<sub>2</sub>O), does not need to be cited.

## Citation using an author-date style

When you add a citation into your text using an author-date style (such as *QUT Harvard* or *QUT APA*), you need to include the following information to the sentence or paragraph:

- **Author's family name or name of the source** (organisation, government department, etc.)
- **Year of publication** — look for the copyright symbol © in the source. This is usually in the front pages of a book or at the bottom of an internet page.
- **Page number** where you found the information, or **paragraph (¶) number** if there is no page number on it because it is an internet source. Summaries of information/sources do not require page numbers if the information comes from many pages.
- **Quotation marks** ("...") or ("...") may be required if you are copying the words as a direct quote.

### Example

"You must cite the sources of each idea or item of information you use, whether you quote, paraphrase or summarise or merely refer to it" (Harris 2005, 5).

↑ ↑ ↑  
author's family name year page

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.

This information can be included *either* at the beginning or the end of the sentence or paragraph:

### Example

#### At the beginning:

Marras et al. (1995) note that peak load moment has been suggested to play a major role in defining lower back disorder risk.

#### At the end:

Peak load moment has been suggested to play a major role in defining lower back disorder risk (Marras et al., 1995).

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.



### Did you know?

Some students think it is okay if you copy and paste more than three words as long as you add the author/source name. This is *not true*. If you copy more than three words *you must also have quotation marks*.

## Citing legal cases and legislation

If you need to cite legal cases and legislation, law does not use an author–date system. If you are using a ‘non-law’ reference style such as Harvard for your writing, follow the requirements for referencing secondary sources such as books and journal articles. Cases and legislation should be referenced in *full* in the text of your writing.

### Example

Section 189 of the *Migration Act* (Cth) requires an officer to detain a person who is suspected of being an unlawful non-citizen. In *Al-Kateb v Godwin* (2004) 219 CLR 562 the court considered the detention and removal of unlawful citizens.

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.



### Did you know?

For instructions on how to incorporate references to primary law sources using a non-law style go to:

- Stuhmcke A, *Legal Referencing*, 3rd ed, Lexis Nexis Butterworths, Australia, 2005.
- QUT Legal Referencing Style Guidelines [www.law.qut.edu.au/files/Legal\\_Reference\\_Style\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.law.qut.edu.au/files/Legal_Reference_Style_Guide.pdf)

## Citation using a numbered style

When adding a citation, direct quote, paraphrase or summary in your text, either place a superscript number (start at<sup>1</sup>) or a number in brackets at the end of the information you are citing.

This number is then used to indicate the bibliographic information in the reference list.

### Example

#### In the body of the text ...

‘You must cite the sources of each idea or item of information you use, whether you quote, paraphrase or summarise or merely refer to it.’<sup>1</sup>

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.

#### In the reference list ...

[1] Harris R. Using sources effectively: Strengthening your writing and avoiding Plagiarism. 2nd ed. California: Pyczak Pub; 2005. p.5.

# Direct quotations: copying words exactly

## Short quotations

When directly quoting somebody, remember to:

1. Copy the words exactly from the original source.
2. Add quotation marks around the copied words.
3. Include the family/source name, year and page/paragraph numbers.

### Example

author's family name  
↓  
year page  
↓ ↓ ↓  
Harris (2005, p. 5) writes "you must cite the sources of each idea or item of information you use, whether you quote, paraphrase or summarise or merely refer to it".  
↑  
Note quotation marks to open and close

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal

If the original source has a grammar or spelling mistake you should copy the mistake as is and add *[sic]* (note that it must be in italics and within square brackets) after the mistake.

If the quotation includes another quotation made in the original, use the *opposite type of quotation marks* (i.e. "...") to those ('...') that you used first.

## Acceptable changes to the original wording

When directly quoting someone, you must copy the exact words from the original source. However, there are three situations where it is acceptable to change the original words slightly. These include:

1. **When you change the capitalisation of the letter of the first word** of the quotation to fit the flow of your sentence. In the example below the 'A' of 'As' has been changed to a lower case 'a':

Harris (2005, p. 35) says "as you work on your paper visit your instructor to ask for input".

2. **When you add words in square brackets [ ]** to make the meaning of the quote clearer to the reader:

"Government [Queensland State] is concerned about the cost of water"  
(Courier Mail, 2007, p. 1).

3. **When you use an ellipsis**, which is three points (...), to show that you are leaving words out:

"There is one exception to the rule of citing outside information. Common knowledge does not need to be cited ... whatever an education person would be expected to know or could locate in an ordinary encyclopedia" (Harris, 2005, p. 17).

## Long quotations

Long quotations use a different style to distinguish them from your normal text.

- Set up a block quotation (not part of the sentence).
- Indent the block from the left and right margins.
- Use a single space only between the lines.
- Do not use quotation marks for the block.
- Include citation details either as a lead in to the block or at the end (see example below for 'end' placement).

#### Example: block quotation

In *Using Sources Effectively*, Harris describes many different ways students should reference their work in academic institutions. The author believes that students must understand the importance of referencing:

An important part of using sources effectively lies in distinguishing between your own ideas and the ideas that come from outside sources ... When you make use of words, ideas or any information from a source other than your own knowledge and experience, you must give credit to the source in a citation. (Harris 2005, 1)

Referencing is clearly an important skill for students who wish to succeed in academic courses.

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal

It is important not to use too many direct quotations in your writing — always check the assignment criteria for information about the use of direct quotations. A common rule is to use a maximum of 10 per cent of the word count as direct quotes in your assignment.

## Indirect quotations/paraphrases: rewriting the original words

### Use your own words

- Use synonyms and new phrases.
- You may use technical words that cannot be substituted.
- Make sure you accurately represent the source/author's ideas.

### Change the sentence pattern

- Rewrite the ideas in a different sentence structure so that you are not copying the source/author's style.

### Change the order of the ideas

- If the author gives two or three ideas change the order of discussion/explanation.

### Provide the correct citation information

- Include the family/source name, year and page/paragraph numbers.

### Example

#### Original source

Cope (2007, 21) says that “plagiarism, a failure to acknowledge sources of material correctly, is an offence against professional standards and is a form of academic dishonesty”.

#### Paraphrase

According to Cope (2007, 21) plagiarism occurs when writers do not reference ideas, and this is a very serious offence.

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or

#### Paraphrase

Cope (2007, p. 21) mentions that plagiarism happens when writers do not give credit to authors; it is dishonest and not professional.

## Summaries: referring to the source/author's main ideas

**All ideas that are not your own should be cited** (and later referenced). However, when you refer to general ideas or just want to acknowledge that an idea came from a secondary resource, then your in-text citation requires only family/source name and year (no page or paragraph numbers).

### Example

Plagiarism is an issue that all students should be aware of (Cope 2007).

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.

If you read from many sources and have written ideas in your own words, but you know that you learned these ideas from other people, list their names alphabetically in your in-text citation using a semicolon (;) to separate the sources.

### Example

Academic writing is more formal and complicated than informal writing, especially when authors need to consider acknowledging referencing (Cope, 2007; Oshima & Hogue, 1991; Putnis & Petelin, 1999).

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.

## Part 3: Reference lists

A reference list contains details of every resource you cited in your assignment. The reference list is placed at the end of your assignment.

- **If you are using an author-date system**, sources are listed in alphabetical order by author/ editor family name, by organisation name, (or by title where there is no author or organisation name) and chronologically for each author where more than one work by the same author/ editor is cited.
- **If you are using a numbered system**, sources are listed in numerical order (i.e. the order they appear in your paper).

When you research and prepare for assessment items it is important to take down the **full bibliographic details** (including the page numbers) from which the information is taken, as you go. It can be very time consuming to follow up references later.



### Did you know?

*Bibliographies* are different from reference lists. They include references used in the assignment *plus* other relevant or useful sources not quoted from but used in the preparation of your assignment.

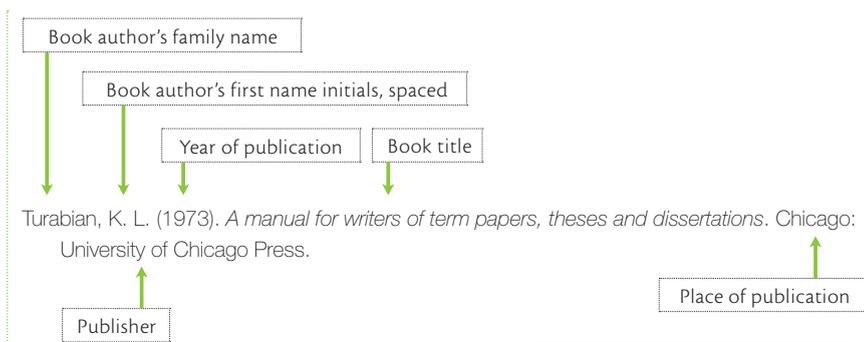
Below are general guidelines to how a reference list should be compiled. However the referencing style used by your faculty may be more specific. Ask your lecturer or tutor which style is required.

## Referencing books

For a book, 'full bibliographic details' include:

- book author/editor family name and first name initial/s, or organisation's name. Include these details for as many authors or editors as the book recognises.
- year of publication
- book title in full (main title and any subtitle noted)
- place of publication
- publisher.

The example below shows a book reference.

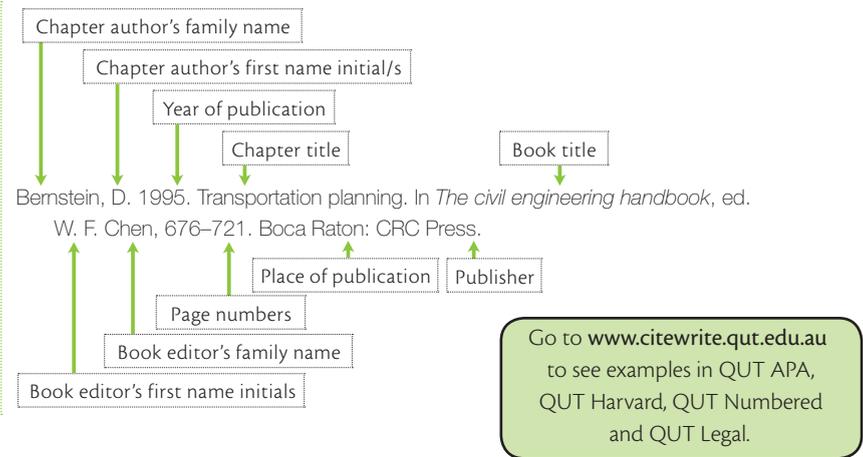


Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) to see examples in QUT APA, QUT Harvard, QUT Numbered and QUT Legal.

## Referencing a book chapter

For a book chapter, 'full bibliographic details' include:

- chapter author/editor family name and first name initial/s, include these details for as many authors or editors as the chapter recognises.
- year of publication
- chapter title
- book title in full
- book author/editor first name initials and family name (note the reversed order here, see example below)
- page numbers
- place of publication
- publisher.

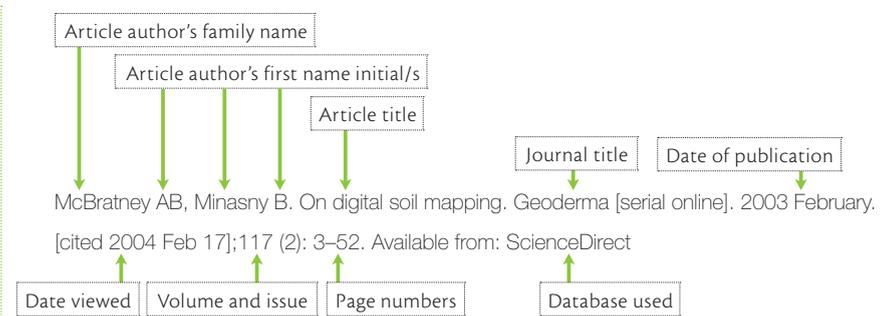


## Referencing journal articles

For a journal article, 'full bibliographic details' include:

- article author family name and first name initial/s. Include these details for as many authors as the article recognises.
- article title
- journal title
- date of publication
- date viewed (if article is electronic not print)
- volume and issue numbers
- page numbers
- database name or URL (depending on style).

The example below shows a reference for a journal article from a database in a numbered style.



# QUT's recommended reference styles

QUT recommends four referencing styles:

- QUT APA – an author-date system
- QUT Harvard – an author-date system
- QUT Numbered (Vancouver) – a numbered style
- QUT Legal – QUT Legal Referencing Style Guidelines

**Important:** As many variations of referencing styles exist, ask your lecturer or tutor which style is used in your faculty.

## Author-date styles

As previously mentioned, for author–date styles:

- **In-text citations** include author name, date and page numbers.
- **The reference list** at the end of the document provides the full details of all works and sources that have been cited in-text. The reference list is also arranged alphabetically by author (or by title where there is no author), and chronologically for each author where more than one work of an author is cited.

### QUT APA

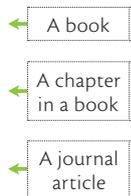
The APA style is the publication style of the American Psychological Association.

Examples reference list using QUT APA

Turabian, K. L. (1973). *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bernstein, D. (1995). Transportation planning. In W. F. Chen (Ed.), *The civil engineering handbook* (pp. 676–721). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

McBratney, A. B., & Minasny, B. (2003). On digital soil mapping. *Geoderma*, 117(2), 3–52.



Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) for a full, current list of examples in QUT APA style.

### QUT Harvard

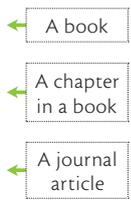
QUT Harvard style is based on the Chicago Manual of Style 15th Edition.

Examples reference list using QUT Harvard

Turabian, K. L. 1973. *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bernstein, D. 1995. Transportation planning. In *The civil engineering handbook*, ed. W. F. Chen, 676–721. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

McBratney, A. B. and B. Minasny. 2003. On digital soil mapping. *Geoderma* 117 (2): 3–52.



Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) for a full, current list of examples in QUT Harvard style.

# Numbered style

For the numbered style:

- **In-text citations** include a superscript number (example<sup>1</sup>) or a number in brackets (1) at the end of the information cited.
- **The reference list** at the end of the document provides the full details of all works and sources that have been cited in-text. The references are listed in the order they appear in the document; that is, in numerical order, not alphabetical order.

## QUT Numbered (Vancouver)

Examples

[1] Turabian KL. A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1973

← A book

[2] Bernstein D. Transportation planning. In Chen WF, editor. The civil engineering handbook. Boca Raton: CRC Press; 1995. p. 676–721

← A chapter in a book

[3] McBratney AB, Minasny B. On digital soil mapping. Geoderma [serial online]. 2003 February [cited 2004 Feb 17]; 117 (2): 3–52. Available from ScienceDirect

← A journal article from a database

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) for a full, current list of examples in QUT Numbered style.

# Legal styles

Legal writing employs a numbered note style to reference its footnotes. This refers the reader to the relevant numbered note at the bottom (or 'foot') of the page where the citation information is provided.

Law students at QUT are required to use the *QUT Legal Referencing Style Guidelines*. A bibliography created using this style will include all secondary sources used in the preparation of the assignment, in addition to the secondary sources cited in the assignment (and referenced in the footnotes).

Primary sources (cases and legislation) are not included in the bibliography. If you are required to list the cases or legislation you have used at the end of the assignment, this is called one of the following:

- case list
- table of cases
- legislation list
- table of legislation.

## QUT Legal

Note that these are *separate* lists. An example of QUT Legal style is set out below.

### Case list

Al-Kateb v Godwin (2004) 219 CLR 562  
Giannarelli v Wraith (1991) 171 CLR 592  
Peat v Lin [2005] 1 Qd R 40

← Cases in alphabetical order

### Legislation list

#### Commonwealth

Evidence Act 1995

#### Queensland

Acts Interpretation Act 1954

Evidence Act 1977

← Legislation in jurisdiction (in alphabetical order) and then in alphabetical order by short title of Act

### Bibliography

Harris R, *Using Sources Effectively: Strengthening your Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism*, 2nd ed, Pyrczak Pub, California, 2005.

Stuhmcke A, *Legal Referencing*, 3rd ed, Lexis Nexis Butterworths, Australia, 2005.

← Bibliography in alphabetical order by author's last name

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) for more information about the QUT Legal Referencing Style Guidelines.



Find guides for  
note taking and  
writing assignments at:  
[www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au)

# write



# Contents

## **Part 1: The 10 conventions of academic writing** **3**

---

Construct a convincing argument	3
Show evidence of critical thinking	4
Use an appropriate tone	4
Use appropriate language conventions	5
Use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling	7
Structure your writing clearly	7
Write in a clear order	7
Use headings and subheadings appropriately	7
Use accurate referencing and citing	7
Observe faculty requirements for formatting and essay presentation	7

## **Part 2: Essay structure** **8**

---

Construct effective academic paragraphs	8
Construct effective introductions	8
Construct effective conclusions	9
Use effective linking words and phrases (transitions)	9

## **Part 3: The writing process – a six-step plan** **11**

---

Step 1: Know what is required of you	11
Step 2: Gather information	11
Step 3: Organise your information — make a plan	12
Step 4: Write the first draft	12
Step 5: Editing and proofreading	12
Step 6: The final check	12

## **Appendix 1: Directive words commonly used in essay questions** **13**

---

## **Appendix 2: Abbreviations and symbols** **15**

---

## **Appendix 3: Useful linking words and phrases (transitions)** **17**

---



# Part 1: The 10 conventions of academic writing

Academic essay writing has a clearly defined structure and certain required conventions (rules) that enable your information to be communicated to the reader in a clear and logical way. Your writing needs to demonstrate your ability to:

- interpret a question accurately
- gather information from a variety of relevant sources
- use this information to develop and support your point of view (argument)
- organise this information into a clear, concise and logical structure.

There are 10 conventions (rules) that will help you write effectively. These will require you to:

- construct a convincing argument
- show evidence of critical thinking
- use an appropriate tone
- use appropriate language conventions
- use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling
- structure your writing clearly
- write in a clear order
- use headings and subheadings appropriately
- use accurate referencing and citing
- observe faculty requirements for formatting and essay presentation.

## Construct a convincing argument

In most academic writing you will need to construct an argument. This does not mean 'be argumentative'; it means to 'express a point of view' on your assignment topic. Be sure you know what the question requires you to do. You need to convince your reader of your argument with strong, relevant evidence. This means the ideas you present must be supported by information from a variety of authoritative sources:



Do not make unjustified claims or generalisations that you cannot support with evidence. You can strengthen your argument by stating the counterarguments and objections to it, and by showing how they can be challenged.

This will demonstrate that you have a full understanding of the topic.



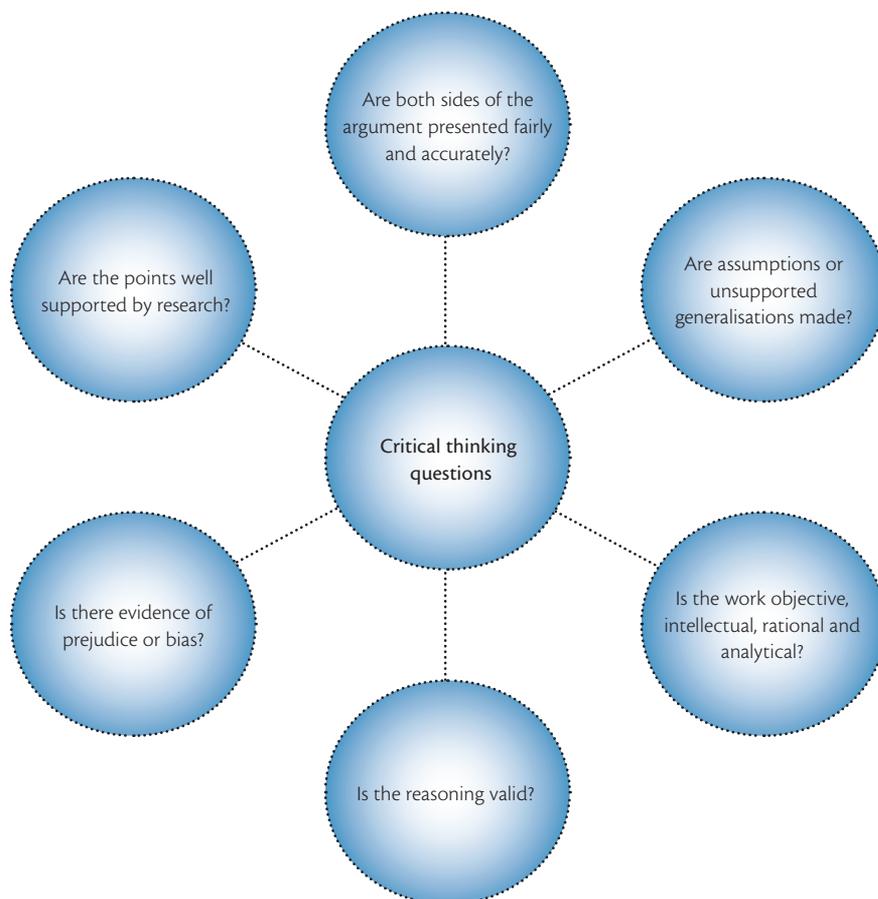
### Did you know?

It is important to reference all sources of information used in your writing. When including evidence such as direct quotes, paraphrases and summaries, you need to accurately cite (or acknowledge) in your sentences and paragraphs the provenance of this information.

## Show evidence of critical thinking

Thinking critically is a crucial part of reading and writing at university. This does not mean being negative or finding fault with something, but identifying and analysing the main points (key concepts) of what you have read. You then need to compare, contrast and evaluate these points carefully and objectively in your writing. Thinking critically will enable you to present a more convincing argument.

To help you think critically, apply these questions to your reading and writing:



## Use an appropriate tone

In order to achieve an academic tone in your writing, you will need to use academic language.

This is usually impersonal, objective and persuasive.

Use formal language rather than colloquialisms or slang expressions:

*Pollution levels were pretty good after the rain.*

**rather**

*Pollution levels were acceptable after the rain.*

Use impersonal language — do not use personal pronouns (I, me, you) unless your assignment task asks you to:

*I will show you the impact of the media on popular culture.*

**rather**

*This essay will examine the impact of the media on popular culture.*

Do not use language that presents a biased or emotional viewpoint:

*The stock markets plummeted and created havoc in trading.*

**rather**

*The stock markets fell significantly and had an impact on trading.*

## Use appropriate language conventions

### Simplicity and economy of language

Most lecturers prefer plain English that conveys meaning simply and clearly. Do not use words just because they sound impressive. You will need to use the technical terminology (*jargon*) of your field; however, balance this with clear, straightforward expression that is easy to understand.

Use succinct language: get to the point

*Legislators are already in the process of reviewing the statutes.*

**rather**

*Legislators are already reviewing the statutes.*

Use one word instead of two or three where possible:

*The data resulting from the research ...*

**rather**

*The research data ...*

Avoid repeating words that mean the same thing:

*The initial introduction ...*

**rather**

*The introduction ...*

Don't use clichés (worn-out expressions that don't add meaning):

*As a matter of fact ...*

*Easier said than done ...*

*Part and parcel ...*

### Non-discriminatory, inclusive language

Avoid words that discriminate against sex, age, nationality or disability. QUT has a policy of non-discriminatory language for both students and staff.



#### Did you know?

You can obtain a copy of *Working with diversity: A guide to inclusive language and presentation for staff and students*, which is available from QUT Equity or at [www.equity.qut.edu.au/publications/publications/equity\\_publications/Working\\_with\\_Diversity\\_2006.pdf](http://www.equity.qut.edu.au/publications/publications/equity_publications/Working_with_Diversity_2006.pdf).

### Word limits

Keep in mind the assignment task and the number of words required. An important skill in academic writing is the ability to express your ideas concisely.

There are two common problems associated with word limit:

- **Going more than 10 per cent over the word limit**  
This indicates that you may need to be more concise. Ensure that every word you use adds meaning to what you are trying to say and remove any redundant phrases. The quality of your writing will be apparent in the relevance and accuracy of the words you use, rather than the quantity.
- **Going more than 10 per cent under the word limit**  
This indicates that you need to broaden your research. Do not repeat yourself or add unnecessary words or

sentences just to meet the word length.

## Over-generalisation

Over-generalisation and stereotyping occur when you make sweeping statements that cannot be applied to all situations:

*All men are better drivers than women.*

**rather**

*Statistics from The Road Safety Council of Australia show that males are responsible for 43 per cent of all major traffic accidents.*

## Abbreviations

- e.g. is used if you are providing an example of something you are discussing.
- i.e. (meaning 'that is'), is used if you are further explaining or illustrating a point.
- The use of e.g. and i.e. is acceptable in some faculties: ask your lecturer or tutor.
- Do not use contractions (shortened forms) such as 'don't' or 'can't'.
- When using names of organisations that can be shortened, write the name of the organisation in full the first time you use it, followed by the acronym in parentheses (round brackets) to introduce it to your work. After that, use the acronym only, e.g. World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Do not use abbreviations such as Qld, Aust, dept, govt.

See Appendix 2 for a glossary of abbreviations and symbols.

## Numbers

There are no set rules to dictate when numbers should be expressed in figures or in words. However, consistency is essential. Figures are often preferred in mathematical, scientific, technical or statistical works, while words are preferred in descriptive or narrative works.

## Use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling

In academic writing it is very important to communicate your meaning accurately. *Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are essential.*

## Structure your writing clearly

At university, you will be expected to produce many different types of assignments, including essays, reports, literature reviews and annotated bibliographies. Although each of these has a different structure, it is important that you present your writing clearly and logically. Instead of reciting what you know about a topic, you will need to present your argument in a well-structured manner, so that even if readers disagree with your position, they will understand how you arrived at your conclusion.

Essay structure is considered in more detail in Part 2.

## Write in a clear order

It is important to present your ideas and information in an order that is clear to your reader. This helps to give your writing coherence and logical flow, and prevents it from being disjointed.

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au)  
and download the guide  
*Patterns of essay organisation.*

## Use headings and subheadings appropriately

When and where headings are appropriate in academic writing can vary. Reports, whether business or scientific, always use headings and subheadings. Essays generally require very few or no headings. However, this does depend on the length of the essay. In long research essays, it may be necessary to use headings and subheadings in order to indicate divisions and subdivisions of a topic.

Check whether headings are appropriate for your assignment — ask your tutor or lecturer.

## Use accurate referencing and citing

A reference list is required for your assignments to show your reader the sources of your information. Some assignments may require you to develop a bibliography as well.

## Observe faculty requirements for formatting and essay presentation

Good presentation is important as it demonstrates that you have taken the time to produce a quality piece of work. Presentation requirements may vary between faculties and units. You should consult your unit outline or check with your lecturer for any specific requirements.

The following suggestions are general guidelines only:

- use A4-size white paper
- use an easy-to-read font style (Times New Roman or Arial)
- use a font size of 11 or 12 point
- use 1.5 or double line spacing
- number each page
- print on one side of the paper only
- set page margins of at least 2.5 cm (left, right, top and bottom)
- staple assignments in the top left-hand corner
- see the required cover sheet and submission procedures at the Assignment Minder website [www.am.qut.edu.au](http://www.am.qut.edu.au)

## Part 2: Essay structure

Although you will be required to write different types of assignments at university (reports, literature reviews, etc), this section focuses on structuring essays because essays are commonly used for assignments and exams. The skills and conventions needed to write good essays can be transferred to any assignment type.

- To construct a well-written, coherent, logical essay you need to understand how to:
  - construct effective academic paragraphs
  - link ideas and create writing flow by using transitions
  - construct effective introductions
  - construct effective conclusions.

### Construct effective academic paragraphs

The following table defines the **four elements** of an effective academic paragraph. The examples are taken from the following essay topic: Discuss the impact that the Work Choices Industrial Relations (IR) legislation had on Australian childcare workers.

Paragraph element	Purpose	Example
1. The topic sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• states the main idea (topic) of the paragraph. This will define for your reader the limits or what will be discussed in this particular paragraph.</li> <li>• is the most important sentence in a paragraph and often comes at the beginning of your paragraph.</li> </ul>	<i>The Work Choices legislation had a profound influence on the standard of living of the average Australian childcare worker.</i>
2. Additional information sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adds more information to the main idea.</li> </ul>	<i>Often workers were being given reduced hours by their employers, or they were expected to work extended hours without receiving penalty rates.</i>
3. Supporting evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps justify your ideas. Your evidence may include examples, data, quotes, statistics, graphics and illustrations.</li> <li>• must be from authoritative sources.</li> </ul>	<i>Research by Wilson (2006, p. 25) indicated that the take-home pay of workers in south-east Queensland childcare centres has decreased by up to fifty dollars per week.</i>
4. A concluding sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• restates the main idea of the paragraph</li> <li>• can also be used as a link to the next paragraph.</li> </ul>	<i>However, financial problems were not the only challenges that the new IR legislation presented to childcare workers.</i>

### Construct effective introductions

#### Purpose

The introduction of an academic essay has special functions and is usually about 5 to 10 per cent of the total word count. It usually consists of one paragraph; however, in long essays with a complex topic, your introduction may be more than one paragraph.

Your introduction should demonstrate immediately your understanding of the assignment question. It should also clarify the position (argument) you have decided to take.

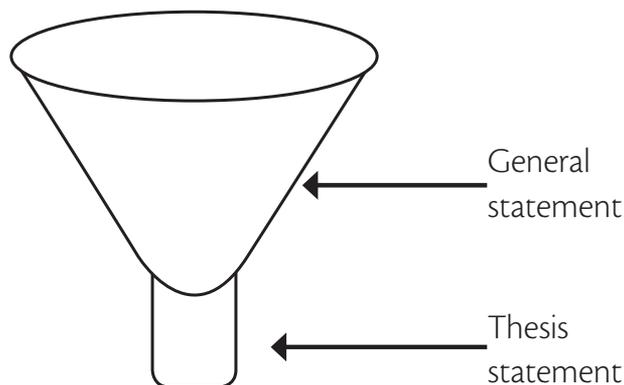
A good introduction will act as a map for your reader and will signpost the structure of your essay.

#### Structure and content

Although there are several ways to write an introductory paragraph, they should all include the following elements:

- An **orientation to the main idea** and some brief background information.
- **Definitions** of any important terms and concepts (try not to use dictionary definitions).
- A **thesis statement** – the most important sentence in the introduction. It is often the last sentence of the introduction and gives the reader the following information:
  - an indication of your position (argument)
  - the scope (this defines the limits of what you will discuss), the outline and organisation (structure) of your essay.

Think of your introduction as a funnel. Start with the broad orientation and definition statements, and then proceed with statements that focus on your argument, scope and structure. Finish your introduction with your thesis statement.



## Construct effective conclusions

The conclusion of an academic essay also has special functions and a clearly defined structure. Your conclusion should:

- include a restatement of your assignment question, your thesis statement and the scope of your argument
- include a summary of your essay structure
- not include any new information
- not end with a rhetorical question.

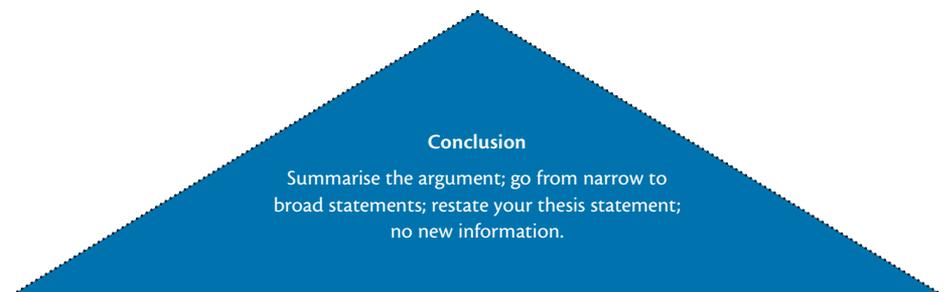
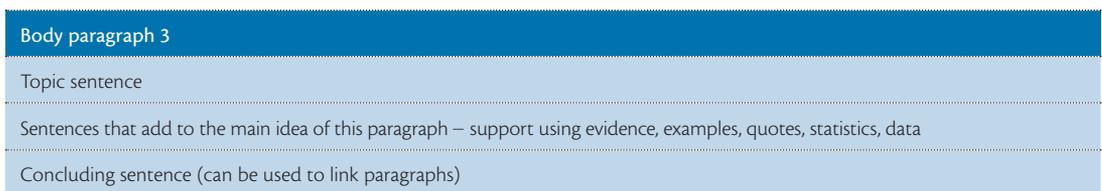
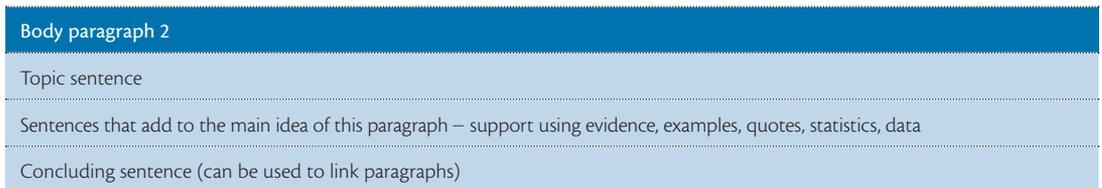
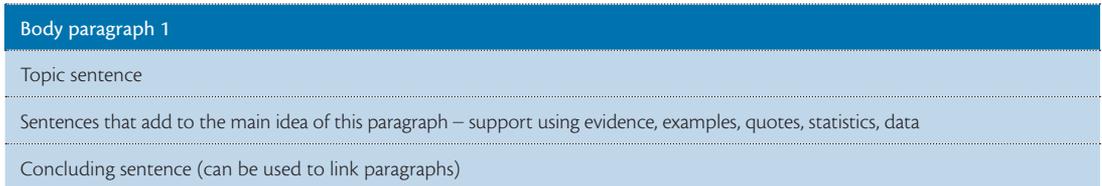
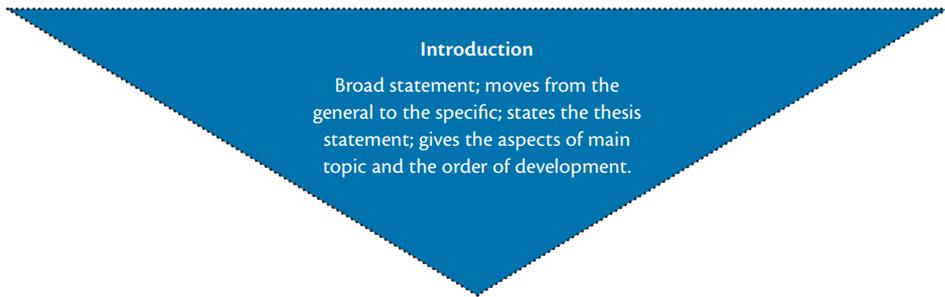
## Use effective linking words and phrases (transitions)

All paragraphs in an essay need to be strongly linked together with transition signals. These are words and expressions that indicate the logical flow of your essay by guiding readers from one paragraph to the next. These transition words or phrases may be placed either:

- in the concluding sentence of a paragraph (to link down to the next point), or
- in the topic sentence of the following paragraph (to link up to the previous point).

For a table of useful transition signals see *Appendix 3*.

## Basic essay structure



# Part 3: The writing process – a six-step plan

## Step 1: Know what is required of you

### Consider the time you have to write the assignment.

Manage your preparation and writing time so that you finish a couple of days early.

### Analyse your question (topic) by looking for key words.

These key words indicate what information is required and how it is to be presented. The key words to look for are the:

- content
- task (directive) and
- limiting words.

The following table explains the function of each of these types of words using this sample essay question: Discuss the impact that the Work Choices Industrial Relations (IR) legislation had on Australian Childcare workers.

Component	Explanation	Example
Content words	These words tell you which ideas, concepts and theories are relevant and should be addressed in your assignment.	<i>Work Choices Industrial Relations legislation</i>
Task or directive words	These are words that tell you what to do in your assignment, e.g. compare, discuss, critically evaluate.	<i>discuss</i>
Limiting words	These will help focus your research and reading on a specific aspect of the wider topic so you only discuss those aspects that have been asked for.	<i>impact Australian childcare workers</i>

See *Appendix 1* for a list of task words that will help you to analyse assignment topics.

### Understand the criteria sheet.

Most assignments at QUT are marked according to a criteria sheet. It is essential to read this before you start planning your essay as it will indicate what your lecturer or tutor is looking for in your assignment.

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) and download the guide *Analysing essay questions*.

### Keep referring to the assignment question.

Referring back to your assignment question at different stages helps ensure your writing and research remain relevant to your topic.

## Step 2: Gather information

Start by generating some initial ideas. Brainstorm all your existing knowledge on the topic from your lectures and notes — make a list of what you still need to find out.

You will then need a variety of sources to support your arguments. These may include books, journal articles, lecture notes and internet sites. It is important to take notes and record your sources as you go.

Critically analyse and evaluate your information for relevancy to your assignment topic.

Go to [www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au) and download the guide *Notemaking Strategies*.

## Step 3: Organise your information — make a plan

At this stage, you'll need to organise your notes into a logical order. The following strategies may help:

- Read through your notes and readings and decide on a few key points.
- List these key points and their sub points.
- Give headings to these key points and list your notes under these headings (these headings will become the sections of your assignment and will help you form paragraphs).
- Ensure that your plan includes details of the main body paragraphs — the topic sentence, the main point and the supporting evidence (the introduction and conclusion can be developed at a later stage).

## Step 4: Write the first draft

Once you have developed the essay plan you can begin your first draft:

- Write a rough version. Try to link all your ideas together into sentences. Don't worry about spelling, grammar or formatting at this stage — just get your ideas down.
- Many people find it useful to leave the introduction until last and start with the main body paragraphs.
- Leave the essay aside for a day before checking and writing the second draft.

## Step 5: Editing and proofreading

These are two separate processes.

Editing requires you to look at the big picture and consider:

- content
- structure
- style
- sources
- word length.

Proofreading requires you to look at the finer details, such as:

- word choice
- grammar
- punctuation
- spelling.



### Did you know?

It is a good idea to get another person to read your first draft and make any comments on the content and organisation of your essay.

## Step 6: The final check

Ask yourself:

- Have you answered all aspects of the question?
- Is your essay coherent and are your topics developed in a logical manner?
- Does each paragraph have a topic sentence, and has this topic been well supported?
- Does each paragraph give the reader enough information to understand the topic?
- Do the paragraphs link together? Check your linking words and phrases (transitions).
- Does your essay have unity? Delete any irrelevant words or sentences.
- Do your introduction and conclusion contain the required information?
- Have you accurately referenced all your arguments?
- Is your reference list accurate?
- Have you adhered to the formatting style of your faculty?

## Appendix 1: Directive words commonly used in essay questions

Account for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain why something has occurred.</li> </ul>
Analyse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take apart a concept or statement in order to consider its elements.</li> <li>Answers should be very methodical and logically organised.</li> </ul>
Argue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An argument means to make clear, prove or accuse (see <i>Critical thinking</i> in Part 2 of this guide).</li> <li>You must have a particular point of view supported by evidence from reliable sources.</li> </ul>
Assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires a judgment about an idea or subject.</li> <li>You may need to state whether the idea or subject being discussed is valuable or relevant after acknowledging points for and against it.</li> <li>Your judgment should be influenced by other authors' views as well as your own opinion (similar to <i>Evaluate</i>).</li> </ul>
Comment on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State your opinion on a topic or idea.</li> <li>You may explain the topic or idea more fully.</li> <li>Your opinion must be supported by evidence from reliable sources.</li> </ul>
Compare/compare and contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires a <i>balanced</i> answer that sets items side by side and shows their similarities and differences.</li> </ul>
Contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires an answer that points out only the <i>differences</i> between two or more topics.</li> </ul>
Critically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often used in conjunction with other directive words, such as <i>critically discuss</i>, <i>critically examine</i> or <i>critically analyse</i>.</li> <li>It does not mean criticise.</li> <li>Requires a balanced answer that points out mistakes or weaknesses and indicates any favourable aspects of the subject of the question.</li> <li>The decision or overall judgment you make must be supported with evidence from reliable sources.</li> </ul>
Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires an answer that explains the precise meaning of a concept.</li> <li>A definition answer will include a discussion of a concept and may also state the limits of a concept.</li> </ul>
Describe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires you to describe the attributes or characteristics of a subject.</li> </ul>
Differentiate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <i>Contrast</i>.</li> </ul>
Discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the item or concept, and then give details about it with supporting information, examples, points for and against, plus explanations for the facts put forward from various points of view.</li> <li>This can be one of the most difficult types of essay question.</li> </ul>
Enumerate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires you to list or specify and describe items or ideas one by one.</li> </ul>
Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <i>Assess</i>.</li> </ul>
Examine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires you to investigate a topic thoroughly.</li> </ul>
Explain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer a detailed and exact explanation of an idea or principle, or a set of reasons for a situation or attitude.</li> <li>The explanation should increase the reader's understanding of a topic or idea.</li> </ul>
Explore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See <i>Examine</i>.</li> </ul>
Generate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This often requires you to come up with new ideas or interpretations on a subject.</li> </ul>
Hypothesise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A hypothesis is a theory regarding particular occurrences. You confirm hypotheses through testing.</li> <li>Suggest the reasons for, and processes by which something has occurred.</li> </ul>
Illustrate/demonstrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This requires an answer that consists mainly of examples to demonstrate or prove the subject of the question.</li> <li>It is often accompanied with further instructions.</li> </ul>
Interpret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very similar to <i>Explain</i>.</li> <li>Describe what your subject means.</li> <li>Examine the key components of a topic or idea and give an evaluation of it.</li> </ul>
Investigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research, study and carefully survey all areas of the subject.</li> </ul>

Justify	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give only the reasons <i>for</i> a position or argument.</li> <li>• The proposition to be argued may be a negative one.</li> <li>• It should convince the reader of your point of view.</li> </ul>
Outline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise information about a subject.</li> <li>• Only the main points and not the details should be included.</li> <li>• Questions of this type often require short answers.</li> </ul>
Prove/disprove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both of these require answers that demonstrate the logical arguments and evidence connected with a proposition.</li> <li>• <i>Prove</i> requires the points 'for', and <i>disprove</i> requires the points 'against'.</li> </ul>
Relate (relationship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make links or connections between two or more ideas, and show how these ideas are related, as well as the nature of the relationship.</li> </ul>
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse, criticise and comment on the main ideas of a topic.</li> <li>• Your essay needs to be structured in logical order.</li> </ul>
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This requires an answer that expresses the relevant points briefly and clearly without lengthy discussion or minor details.</li> </ul>
Summarise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <i>Outline</i>.</li> </ul>
Trace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trace is frequently used in historical questions (but not only in History courses).</li> <li>• It requires the statement and brief description—in logical order—of the stages in the development of a theory, a person's life, a process, etc.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: Abbreviations and symbols

The following list is designed as a quick reference to help you interpret abbreviations you may come across in your research, mostly in referencing. Not all are suitable for your own academic writing. If unsure, write in full, or check with your faculty.

Abbreviation/symbol	Meaning	Function
&	ampersand — and	Used instead of 'and' in referencing when writing between parentheses.
©	copyright	This symbol is usually followed by the copyright owner's name and the date of the material's publication or release.
c.	<i>circa</i> — about, approximately (dates)	Used in referencing when an exact date is unknown, but can be approximated with some degree of accuracy: Taylor, I.J. c. 1981
cf.	<i>confer</i> — compare with	Used in writing when an author would like you to compare their findings or statements with earlier ones, or those of another author.
ed., eds.	editor(s)	Used in referencing where the role of the editor(s) is paramount. Usually when a work is compiled, translated or revised.
edn., edns.	edition(s)	Used in a reference list when a work cited is not the first edition: Merchant, R.T. 1984, <i>Horses</i> , 2nd edn.
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> — for example	Check with your lecturer or tutor if this abbreviation is appropriate in your academic writing.
et al.	<i>et alii</i> — and others	Used instead of listing many names when referencing a book that has several authors, the number of authors referred to before using et al. differs with referencing styles: March, P. et al. 1999
etc.	<i>et cetera</i> — and the rest	It is usually better to avoid this expression in academic writing as it can appear vague.
fig., figs.	figure(s)	This abbreviation can be used when referring to figures in the text of your work.
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> — in the same place	Can be used to indicate a reference to a work cited immediately before, instead of writing the reference again. It can refer to the same page or a different one, in which case a page number is included after a comma.
id.	<i>idem</i> — the same	This takes the place of an author's name in a reference, and signifies that the author is the same as that in the previous reference.
i.e.	<i>id est</i> — that is to say	Check with your lecturer or tutor if this abbreviation is appropriate in your academic writing.
loc. cit.	<i>loco citato</i> — in the same place	Refers readers back to the same page of a work already cited.
MS	<i>manuscriptum</i> — manuscript	Can be used when referencing a manuscript.
NB	<i>nota bene</i> — note well	Usually better to avoid this abbreviation in academic writing.
n.d.	no date (of publication)	Used in referencing when a date is unknown.
n.p.	no place (of publication)	Used in referencing when a place of publication is unknown.
non seq.	<i>non sequitur</i> — it does not follow	An inference or conclusion which does not follow from the premise.
op. cit.	<i>opere citato</i> — in the work cited	Refers the reader to a previously referenced work, but to a different page.
p., pp.	page(s)	Used for indicating page numbers in referencing.
para, paras	paragraph(s)	Used for indicating paragraph numbers in referencing.
PS PPS	<i>postscriptum and post postscriptum</i>	The supplementary part(s) of a document.
s, ss	section(s)	Used when referring to sections in acts and ordinances (legislation).
sec.	section	Used when referring to sections of a text.
sic	thus	Use only when it is essential to point out an error in quoted material; format the <i>letters only</i> to italic and place between square (editorial) brackets, e.g. [sic].
v., vv.	verse(s)	Used when referring to verses in poetry and songs.
v., vs.	<i>versus</i>	Against.
vol., vols.	volume(s)	Used for indicating volume numbers in referencing.

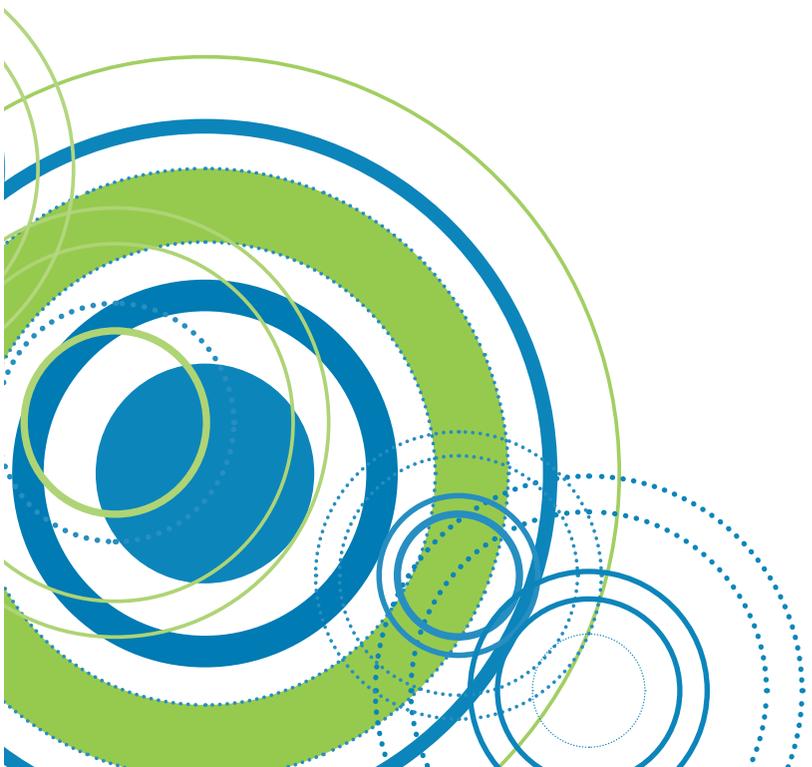
## Appendix 3: Useful linking words and phrases (transitions)

<b>For continuing an idea or introducing another idea</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition ...</li> <li>• Similarly ...</li> <li>• Furthermore ...</li> <li>• Continuing this idea ...</li> <li>• Pursuing this further ...</li> <li>• Additionally ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequently ...</li> <li>• Because ...</li> <li>• Also ...</li> <li>• In the same way ...</li> <li>• Moreover ...</li> <li>• Clearly then ...</li> </ul>
<b>For providing a contrasting or alternative view</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the other hand ...</li> <li>• Or ...</li> <li>• Yet ...</li> <li>• In opposition to ...</li> <li>• Whereas ...</li> <li>• Unlike the previous example ...</li> <li>• Instead ...</li> <li>• Although ...</li> <li>• However ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While ...</li> <li>• In contrast ...</li> <li>• Nonetheless ...</li> <li>• Even though ...</li> <li>• Nevertheless ...</li> <li>• Contrary to these findings ...</li> <li>• In spite of ...</li> <li>• Despite these findings ...</li> </ul>
<b>For showing cause and effect</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following ...</li> <li>• Therefore ...</li> <li>• For this reason ...</li> <li>• Thus ...</li> <li>• Consequently ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response ...</li> <li>• As a result of ...</li> <li>• The result ...</li> <li>• Due to this ...</li> <li>• The reaction ...</li> </ul>
<b>For restating a point or giving an example</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In other words ...</li> <li>• For instance ...</li> <li>• One such occurrence ...</li> <li>• Also ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To demonstrate ...</li> <li>• Specifically ...</li> <li>• For example ...</li> <li>• To illustrate ...</li> </ul>
<b>For showing sequence or time relationship</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firstly ...</li> <li>• After ...</li> <li>• Later ...</li> <li>• Sometime ...</li> <li>• Thereafter ...</li> <li>• Secondly ...</li> <li>• As soon as ...</li> <li>• Meanwhile ...</li> <li>• Presently ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Then ...</li> <li>• Finally ...</li> <li>• In the meantime ...</li> <li>• Next ...</li> <li>• Eventually ...</li> <li>• Soon ...</li> <li>• In the first place ...</li> <li>• Afterwards ...</li> </ul>
<b>To introduce a result</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a result ...</li> <li>• Therefore ...</li> <li>• Thus ...</li> <li>• Hence ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In light of these findings ...</li> <li>• Consequently ...</li> <li>• Accordingly ...</li> <li>• So ...</li> </ul>
<b>To introduce an example</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example ...</li> <li>• An example of this is ...</li> <li>• ..., such as ...</li> <li>• For instance ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To illustrate this ...</li> <li>• ..., namely ...</li> <li>• Specifically ...</li> </ul>
<b>For concluding or summarising</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therefore ...</li> <li>• Hence ...</li> <li>• In conclusion ...</li> <li>• Indeed ...</li> <li>• In final consideration ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thus ...</li> <li>• In final analysis ...</li> <li>• Clearly ...</li> <li>• In brief ...</li> <li>• In summary ...</li> </ul>



Use and photocopy  
templates to help  
when studying for your  
assignments:

[www.citewrite.qut.edu.au](http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au)



**cite | write**  
TEMPLATES



## REFERENCE TEMPLATE

Use these templates to help you record all the important reference details for the books, journal articles and internet sources that you find for your study. You can also note down some keywords you used to find the information, and other details that might remind you where to find it again if necessary (e.g. a call number, or web address).

Once you have all the details, you can then adapt it to suit the referencing style you need to use for your reference lists (e.g. QUT APA, or QUT Harvard).

### Book:

Author(s):	
Year of publication: (& edition)	
Book title:	
Publisher:	
Keywords and/or source of information:	

### Book chapter:

Author of chapter:	
Title of chapter:	
Editor(s) of book:	
Year of publication: (& edition)	
Book title:	
Publisher:	
Keywords:	

**Journal article:**

Author(s) of article:			
Year of publication: (& edition)			
Article title:			
Journal title:			
Volume No:		Issue No:	
Page numbers:			
URL/Database Date retrieved (if necessary):			

Keywords:	
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**Website:**

Author(s) of page/site or organisation:	
Year of publication: (or site update)	
Title of webpage:	
Date retrieved:	
URL:	
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## NOTETAKING TEMPLATE

Use this template to help you record notes from the books, journal articles and other sources that you are reading as part of your research. As you make notes from each book, journal article or website, try to organise them into three columns:

- In the first column, record themes or key ideas from your reading.
- In the middle column, record the page number that the key idea was on, and maybe some notes or a direct quote.
- In the third column, record your own comments or questions about the key idea. This may include how or where you might use this in your assignment, how this links to other research you have done, and comments about issues to be clarified. This column is important as it helps you to develop your critical thinking skills.

Author(s):	
Publisher:	Title:
Year:	Location:
Journal:	
Volume:	Number:
Other:	

Themes/Key concepts	Notes/Quotes/Content/Page number	Comments/Cross-referencing/ Questions to be clarified/Terminology



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