

**The following is a summary of the main points discussed during the last session (students' questions).**

**Find links at the end of the document for further information.**

## **Reporting Verbs**

### **1. What are the different reporting verbs that can be used?**

Reporting verbs differ in terms of their strength; for example, 'to suggest' is much weaker, and more tentative, than 'to argue'. The two verbs convey very different pictures about how the author you are studying sees his or her materials and research.

Some reporting verbs are used principally to say what the writer does and does not do. These verbs do not indicate any value judgement on the part of the writer; they are called 'neutral' reporting verbs.

A second group of verbs is used to show when the writer has an inclination to believe something but still wishes to be hesitant; we call these 'tentative' reporting verbs.

Finally, if the writer has strong arguments to put forward and is absolutely sure of his or her ground, we can use 'strong' reporting verbs to refer to these ideas.

Obviously, it is important (when we read) to ensure that we **interpret** the writer's ideas correctly. For instance, if we say 'Jones (1999) argues' rather than 'Jones (1999) suggests', this is a major difference of meaning. The first indicates strength, the second tentativity. It is very important, in academic writing, not to misinterpret a writer's intentions when we are reporting them.

In the table below, the main reporting verbs in English are classified in terms of their function, and their strength.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Function and strength</b></p> <p><b>NEUTRAL:</b> verbs used to say what the writer describes in factual terms, demonstrates, refers to, and discusses, and verbs used to explain his/her methodology.</p> | <p><b>Example verbs</b></p> <p>describe, show, reveal, study, demonstrate, note, point out, indicate, report, observe, assume, take into consideration, examine, go on to say that, state, believe (unless this is a strong belief), mention, etc.</p> |
| <p><b>Function and strength</b></p> <p><b>TENTATIVE:</b> verbs used to say what the writer suggests or speculates on (without being absolutely certain).</p>  | <p><b>Example verbs</b></p> <p>suggest, speculate, intimate, hypothesise, moot, imply, propose, recommend, posit the view that, question the view that, postulate, etc.</p>  |
| <p><b>Function and strength</b></p> <p><b>STRONG:</b> verbs used to say what the writer makes strong arguments and claims for.</p>  | <p><b>Example verbs</b></p> <p>argue, claim, emphasise, contend, maintain, assert, theorize, support the view that, deny, negate, refute, reject, challenge, strongly believe that, counter the view/argument that, etc.</p>                           |

## 2. What are some of the main language points that need to be considered when using reporting verbs?

- The structure of sentences when using reporting verbs can vary, and can be flexible, for example:

e.g.

Jones (1999) argues, in his study of thermodynamics, that...

As Jones (1999) argues in his study of thermodynamics,...

In his study of thermodynamics, Jones (1999) argues that...

- It is possible (and often quite attractive stylistically) to invert the subject and verb when reporting:

e.g. Thermodynamics, argues Jones (1999), is..

- Reporting the work of others often needs an extra sentence introduction or 'lead-in':

e.g. In considering Smith's discussion on thermodynamics, Jones (1999) argues that ...



- It is important to remember to put the final 's' on the verb when the subject is 'he/she'.
- Very often, in academic writing, reporting takes place in the **present tense**, as in the examples above; this is because of the need to bring past research into the present moment.
- If you have used the verb 'said' very often in your writing, try to replace this with something more descriptive and precise.
- The words 'mention' or 'reckon' are informal and are often best replaced with a more formal equivalent.
- Other informal verbs of saying that are best avoided in academic writing are: 'come up with', 'guess', etc.
- As regards referencing, it is usually best to put the year of publication straight after the name used, before going on with the sentence. The page reference can then be placed at the end of the sentence.



# Background of the Study VS Literature Review




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## background and a literature review

|  | <b>Background of a study</b><br> | <b>Literature review</b><br> |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Q</b> Where does it appear in the research paper? | In the first part of the Introduction section   | After the background in the Introduction section  |
| <b>Q</b> What does it present?                       | The context of the study  | A critical analysis of existing literature  |
| <b>Q</b> What is its purpose?                        | To highlight the significance of the study  | To evaluate the progress of knowledge in the research area  |
| <b>Q</b> What does it do?                            | Introduces the topic in context and explains how it leads up to the research problem                              | Helps identify the gaps in literature that led to the study   |
| <b>Q</b> What does it involve?                       | Introducing the broad area of research and narrowing it down to the problem at hand                               | Analyzing the literature to show what research has been done on the topic                                       |
| <b>Q</b> What is its length?                         | Is short and concise  | Is lengthy and detailed   |

   
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***Table 1: Aims of the literature review for thesis writers***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>To show a thorough professional grasp of the area</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifies the relevant literature</li><li>• Identifies key ideas, schools of thought, debates and problems</li><li>• Shows understanding of main theories in area, and how these are applied</li><li>• Evaluates previous research</li><li>• Helps avoid unintentional replication of another study</li></ul> |
| <b>To justify your research</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifies gaps in current knowledge</li><li>• Establishes the need for your research</li><li>• Helps define focus and boundaries of your research</li></ul>   |
| <b>To justify your approach</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discusses previous approaches to topic, placing your study in context</li><li>• Explains your choice of theoretical framework and methodology</li></ul>  |
| <b>To synthesise literature in the appropriate academic style</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides a well-structured account that follows a logical progression</li><li>• Provides a well-argued account that supports your research question</li><li>• Provides a well-written account, meticulously referenced.</li></ul>  |



## Examples of Literature Review and Background of the Study

Please note that these samples are very short and elaborate a very limited idea. However, they have been chosen to clarify the idea of developing both sections of the research paper, with extra focus on the content and organization of ideas.

### Example synthesis of literature

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Introducing a reoccurring theme                                       | The impact of social media on the academic performance of tertiary students has been well researched. Although some research findings outline social and emotional benefits of using  |
| Positioning research findings (different points of view)              | social media for learning (e.g., Kabilan et al., 2010; McCarthy, 2013), a number of studies demonstrate a correlation between student use of social media and poor academic achievement. For example, a study of both undergraduate and graduate students found that  |
| Elaborating on research findings (that align with your point of view) | social media users had a lower Grade Point Average (GPA) (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). These findings were also mirrored in an extensive study of nearly two thousand undergraduate students (Junco, 2012). However, researchers also argue that the use of social media is, in itself, not necessarily a negative predictor of GPA. Instead, negative impact relates to <i>how</i> students use social media. In one large-scale study, for instance, students who attempted to multi-task, by using social media at the same time as studying, were not only less efficient and less productive, but also had lower GPAs than students who studied without using social media (Karpinski, Kirschner, Ozer, Mellot, & Ochwo, 2013). Similarly, Lau (2017) concluded that it was the |
| Stating the significance of research findings                         | simultaneous use of social media for non-academic purposes that had a negative correlation with academic performance. These recent studies have begun to provide insight into how social media use may negatively affect the academic performance of tertiary students.   |

## Example: Background of Study

- In manufacturing industry, storing and retrieving are significant activities influencing the productivity.
- The storage assignment will influence the efficiency of the order picking (Chan, 2010).
- Factors such as warehouse layout, demand, location of items and picking methods affect the efficiency of the system (Gattorna, 1997)
- Redesign the process, new equipment, layout or automation, computerization of process and use operational policies are necessary to increase system efficiency (Manzini, 2012) .
- The study is conducted at one of the apparel industry in Melaka which is a multinational manufacturing company with worldwide operations.
- This study is about to assess the storage and retrieval system and propose an alternative system that can increase the efficiency and thus reduce the operating cost of the industry.

### References:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/globalpad-rip/openhouse/academicenglishskills/grammar/reportingverbs/>

<https://www.editage.com/insights/6-differences-between-a-study-background-and-a-literature-review>

<https://twitter.com/writethatphd/status/1044918172401446912?lang=ru>

<https://library.aut.ac.nz/doing-assignments/literature-reviews>

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/10529755/>

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/8622647/>