



English Grammar

A Student's Guide to Using 'Verbs' in Academic Writing



Reporting Verbs



In academic writing, there is an important group of verbs called 'reporting verbs'

Explanation

The term 'reporting verb' is used to talk about a verb which introduces information that is written by another author. An author's name is often the subject of the verb. The object or complement of a reporting verb usually contains information from an academic text.



Reporting Verbs



Reporting verbs can be grouped as follows:

'Claims & Results'

- These verbs are more 'objective'
- They report information without expressing opinion

'Knowing & Thinking'

- These verbs can be 'evaluative'
- They can show an opinion or value judgement



Claims & Results



Common verbs for reporting claims and results

Examples

analyse; argue; assert; claim; conclude; contend;
demonstrate; describe; develop; discuss; examine;
expand; explain; find; illustrate; maintain; note;
observe; point out; propose; provide; report; show;
state; study; suggest;



Knowing & Thinking



Verbs expressing 'knowing' or 'thinking'

Examples

assume; believe; consider; estimate; feel; know;
presume; suppose; think; understand



Reporting Claims



Common verbs for reporting claims (i.e. statements) based on theory or research

Key claims	Supporting points
assert claim state	note observe point out



Reporting Claims



It can be useful to report a main claim then follow with an additional or supporting point

Example

Smith (2012) **claims** that poor diet is a key cause of obesity. He **notes** that obesity is a major issue in developing countries.

Note: The verb 'claim' can be used to introduce a main statement while the verb 'note' is used to add an additional, related point.



Reporting Results



Common verbs for reporting the results of experiments and related conclusions

Results/Findings	Conclusions
demonstrate	conclude
find	indicate
show	suggest



Reporting Results



It can be useful to report a result then follow with a conclusion drawn from that result

Example

In a study to investigate obesity, Smith (2012) **showed** that young people who ate fast food more than 3 times a week were heavier than young people who ate meals at home. This finding **suggests** that obesity is associated with eating fast food.



Claims & Results



Research papers may report other types of results such as processes. Useful verbs include:

Verb	Noun phrase
Smith (2012) describes	5 stages of learning.
Smith (2012) identifies	3 phases of social adaptation.



Claims & Results



The verb 'mention' is unsuitable for reporting the results of experiments and studies

Mention

Smith (2010) **mentioned** three factors which can lead to obesity.

The verb 'mention' makes the 'three factors' seem unimportant and not supported by evidence or analysis.



Reporting Verbs



Some verbs should not be used too often

Say

It is acceptable to use 'say' to introduce a direct quotation from an important person in a field, such as Chief Executive of a company. However, frequent use of the verb 'say' can make a piece of writing sound informal. Therefore, 'say' should not be used too often.



Verb Patterns



There are specific grammatical patterns for reporting verbs. The most common include:

- Reporting verb + 'that'-clause
- Reporting verb + noun phrase
- Reporting verb + object + infinitive

Note: The pattern 'Reporting verb + object + infinitive' is more common with verbs of knowing and believing



Verb Patterns



Some reporting verbs for 'claims & results' can only be followed by a noun phrase

Verb	Noun phrase
Smith (2010) describes	criminal behaviour in the young.
Smith (2010) examined	factors affecting youth crime.
Smith (2010) supports	a policy of crime prevention.



Verb Patterns



This group of verbs cannot be followed by a 'that'-clause or the pattern, object + infinitive

Examples

- ✗ Smith (2012) describes ~~that criminal behaviour exists in the young.~~
- ✗ Smith (2012) examines Smith (2012) examines ~~factors to affect youth crime.~~



Verb Patterns



Some reporting verbs for 'claims & results' are typically followed by a 'that'-clause

Verb	'that'-clause
Smith (2010) asserts	that a structured daily routine is essential for young people.
Smith (2010) claims	that crime is prevalent among the young.
Smith (2010) concludes	that youth crime is preventable.



Verb Patterns



Some reporting verbs for 'claims & results' are typically followed by a 'that'-clause

Verb	'that'-clause
Smith (2010) contends	that youth crime is preventable.
Smith (2010) states	that crime is prevalent among the young.



Verb Patterns



This group of verbs cannot be followed by a noun-phrase

Examples

- ✗ Smith (2012) asserts ~~the need for a structured daily routine for young people.~~
- ✗ Smith (2012) claims ~~the prevalence of crime among the young.~~
- ✗ Smith (2012) concludes ~~the prevention of youth crime.~~



Verb Patterns



This group of verbs cannot be followed by a noun-phrase

Examples

- ✗ Smith (2012) asserts ~~the need for a structured daily routine for young people.~~
- ✗ Smith (2012) claims ~~the prevalence of crime among the young.~~
- ✗ Smith (2012) concludes ~~the prevention of youth crime.~~



Knowing & Thinking



In the active voice, verbs of knowing & thinking can be followed by a 'that'-clause

Verb	'that'	Subject	Verb
assume			is..
consider	that	something	was..
suppose			has been..



Knowing & Thinking



Pattern: verb + 'that'-clause

Examples

Psychologists assume **[verb]** that the mind exists **['that'-clause]**.

People consider **[verb]** that the Internet has been an invaluable tool in modern life **['that'-clause]**.

The judge supposed **[verb]** that the evidence was correct **['that'-clause]**.



Knowing & Thinking



In the active voice, verbs of knowing & thinking can be followed by: 'verb' + 'object' + 'infinitive'

Verb	Object	Infinitive
assume	something	to (exist)..
consider	something	to (be)..
suppose	something	to (be)..



Knowing & Thinking



Structure: verb [v], object [obj], infinitive [inf]

Examples

Psychologists assume [v] the mind [obj] to exist [inf].

People consider [v] the internet [obj] to be [inf]
invaluable in everyday life.

The judge supposed [v] the evidence [obj] to be [inf]
correct.



Knowing & Thinking



In the active voice, the pattern; verb + 'that'-clause is 'preferred' (i.e. more common)

Examples

- ✓✓ Psychologists assume that the mind exists
- ✓ Psychologists assume the mind to exist

Note: Both sentences are grammatically correct. However, the first sentence pattern is used more often and is therefore more typical.



Knowing & Thinking



In the passive voice, the pattern; verb + infinitive is 'preferred' (i.e. more common)

Examples

- ✓✓ The mind is assumed to exist
- ✓ That the mind exists is assumed

Note: Both sentences are grammatically correct. However, the first sentence pattern is used more often and is therefore more typical.



Knowing & Thinking



However, in the passive voice, a 'that'-clause is common after 'impersonal it'

Examples

- ✓✓✓ It is assumed that the mind exists.
- ✓✓ The mind is assumed to exist.
- ✓ That the mind exists is assumed.

Note: Both sentences are grammatically correct. However, the first sentence pattern is 'preferred' and is more common.



References



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Thank you for watching!



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