

Now that you've thought through the qualities of paragraphs, it's time to address the **big issue**. At university, you are mainly meant to draw the knowledge items of your paragraphs from **credible sources** and state **who** those sources are (**referencing**). This is particularly important in your assignment essays.

About academic paragraphs

Academic paragraphs are the body paragraphs of your essay and account for about 90% of your word count and marks. They contain the points you want to make with supporting arguments and evidence. These paragraphs use a basic pattern (recipe) you can follow. The sentences in your body paragraphs may include citations from information sources, examples and evidence.

Analysis of the structure of an academic paragraph

Read the following academic paragraph from a research essay and answer the questions that follow.

Assignment essay tasks are set to assist students to develop mastery of their study subject. Firstly, assignment tasks enhance understandings about subject matter. Yang and Baker (2005, p. 1) reason that “to master your learning materials and extend your understandings, you need to write about the meanings you gain from your research”. Secondly, research (Jinx, 2004; Zapper, 2006) clearly demonstrates that students learn the writing conventions of a subject area while they are researching, reading and writing in their discipline. This activity helps them to “crack the code” of the discipline (Bloggs, 2003, p. 44). Thus, students are learning subject matter and how to write in that disciplinary area by researching and writing assignment essays.

1. **What is the topic sentence?**
2. **What will the whole paragraph be about?**
3. **There are two main points used in the paragraph to develop the position taken in the topic sentence (the success of assignment essays as a learning device). What are they?**
4. **Who were the authorities cited to support the information put forward in argument 1?**
5. **Who were the authorities cited to support the information put forward in argument 2?**

- 6. What is the concluding sentence?**

- 7. Name three transitional (connecting) words.**

- 8. How many sentences and words are there in the paragraph?**

Reporting verbs for introducing authors

In academic writing, you will need to refer to the research of others and incorporate this information into your writing. You *must* connect the author clearly to the information you are using. If you place the author before the information in your writing, then reporting verbs can be used to introduce their ideas. There are many reporting verbs that you can choose from to avoid overusing 'says' —

Brown (2009, p. 36) ~~says that~~ ...

Use the correct tense for reporting verbs

Mostly, students are encouraged to use present tense to report findings from literature. Past tense is mainly used to report findings from personal research or to refer to information that was once true, but is no longer valid. This can vary, however, according to subject areas (e.g. Past tense is mainly used in the Sciences and Psychology).

In her study on Internet privacy, Johnson (2005, p.197) **concludes** that a person can be identified by name on the Internet using age and address details.

Previous studies on Internet usage throughout the 1990s **ignored** the notion of Internet security and focused mainly on the benefits of accessing information via the Internet (Black, 2013, p. 39).

In their study on suburban Internet usage, Smith et al. (2012, pp. 34-126) **demonstrated** that 90% of 2000 surveyed participants were concerned about violations of their privacy.

Use reporting verbs correctly to incorporate the ideas of others

When you are going to support your argument with a paraphrase or a direct quotation from another writer, you must avoid just 'dropping in' the information. Instead, use a reporting verb (or signal phrase) to prepare your reader that you are using information obtained from another author.

The right to privacy of Internet users has been challenged as the use of the WWW spreads at an exponential rate throughout the world. Governments are now passing acts to support consumer rights to privacy. ~~“Organisations are required to safeguard personal information they hold from unauthorised access and disclosure”~~. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002).

The right to privacy of Internet users has been challenged as the use of the WWW spreads at an exponential rate throughout the world. Governments are now passing acts to support consumer rights to privacy. **The Commonwealth of Australia (2002, p. 21) have established**

legislation that clearly states that “organisations are required to safeguard personal information they hold from unauthorised access and disclosure”. As a result, companies are forced to consider ways of ensuring that they have adequate data security to protect the privacy of their customers.

Use grammatically correct verbs to match your intended meaning

REPORTING VERB + THAT + MAIN IDEA

Peterson et al. (2013, para. 36) acknowledge that Internet privacy is a growing issue in the modern world of communication.

Examples of verbs suitable to be used in this way:

accepts, acknowledges, adds, admits, advises, announces, agrees, alleges, argues, asserts, assumes, believes, claims, comments, complains, concedes, concludes, confirms, considers, contends, decides, declares, denies (deny), determines, discovers, doubts, emphasises, estimates, explains, feels, finds, guarantees, holds, hypothesises, knows, implies (imply), indicates, infers, insists, maintains, mentions, notes, observes, objects, points out, postulates, predicts, professes, promises, proposes, proves, reasons, realises, recommends, remarks, reports, requests, restates, reveals, says, shows, states, stresses, suggests, thinks, theorises, understands, verifies (verify), warns

* **Grammar alert:** some reporting verbs cannot be followed immediately by ‘that’.

REPORTING VERB + SOMETHING + CONNECTING WORD

Jackson (2012, pp. 23-38) refutes the claim made by Smith that ...

Studies by Campbell (2005, 2008) highlight the disadvantages in terms of ...

Research by Smith et al. (2006, para. 36) validates the argument that ...

These findings illustrate the importance of Internet privacy as ... (Brown, 2007; Jackson, 2011)

Examples of verbs suitable to be used in this way

advocates (for), alerts, analyses, appraises, applauds, assesses, assures, blames, challenges, characterises, congratulates, classifies (classify), criticises, defines, demonstrates, defends, describes, discusses, depicts, encourages, endorses, evaluates, examines, expresses, faults, identifies (identify), illustrates, interprets, investigates, objects (to), portrays, praises, presents, puts forward, questions, refers, refutes, rejects, studies (study), substantiates, supports, takes issue with, throws light on, validates, verifies (verify), views

Examples of plagiarism

How would you define plagiarism? What are some common forms of plagiarism?

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-
-
-
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To reference or not to reference

When you write a research essay, you use information from three kinds of sources:

Self-generated knowledge

Common knowledge

The intellectual property of others

What are the differences between them? Which of them must be referenced?

Try classifying these examples.

Punctuation codes are used in writing to ensure clarity of meaning.	Researchers reveal that a fundamental cause of poor student writing is a lack of punctuation skills.	My research into the writing problems of 300 students indicates that poor marks for essays correlates with difficulties with punctuation.
Intellectual property	Self-generated knowledge	Common knowledge

The following sentence is a short direct quote that is taken directly from Newble and Cannon (1989, p. 2): *“Motivation is such a key factor that it appears to be more important in learning than intelligence.”*

Seven possible ways to present this sentence in your academic writing are below. Try to work out which are plagiarised and which are acceptable according to the APA style of referencing. Select your responses to the following examples:

e.g.1: Motivation is such a key factor that it appears to be more important in learning than intelligence.

e.g.2: “Motivation is such a key factor that it appears to be more important in learning than intelligence.”

e.g.3: “Motivation is such a key factor that it appears to be more important in learning than intelligence” (Newble & Cannon, 1989, p. 2).

e.g.4: According to Newble and Cannon (1989, p. 2), “Motivation is such a key factor that it appears to be more important in learning than intelligence”.

e.g.5: A key factor in learning is motivation, which appears to be more important than intelligence (Newble & Cannon, 1989, p. 2).

e.g.6: Motivation may be more critical than intelligence in learning (Newble & Cannon, 1989, p. 2).

e.g.7: Newble and Cannon (1989, p. 2) suggest that motivation may be more critical than intelligence in learning.

The following guidelines should help you to avoid plagiarism:

Write the source on any notes or copies you make from any document or electronic sources such as the internet. The habit of copying or 'cutting-and-pasting' text directly from a source as you read is very dangerous. It is easy to forget that the notes you make or excerpts you have 'cut-and-pasted' are not your own and to later write them into an essay or report as if they were your own words.

Keep details of the sources you have relied upon for each assignment throughout the unit. Plagiarism is often the result of lack of care, poor study and/or poor referencing methods.

Acknowledge all sources containing the concepts, experiments, performances or results from which you have extracted or developed your ideas, even if you put those ideas into your own words.

Acknowledge the source of all images you include in your assignments.

Always use quotation marks or some other acceptable indicator of quotation when quoting directly from a work. It is not enough merely to acknowledge the source.

Avoid excessive paraphrasing and quoting, even where you acknowledge the source. Instead, read your sources then put them out of sight. Think about the meaning that is important and relevant to you and your task, then write this in your own words. This approach will help improve your writing generally.

Be familiar with the style of acknowledgment that is recommended for use in each of your units, including the referencing techniques required for information sourced from the internet.

Be aware of the rules regarding group work and collaboration. Collaboration (appropriately acknowledged) is permitted in the case of team or group projects. It is also permitted in the more general case when the collaboration is limited to the discussion of general strategies or help of a general nature. If you have any doubt about what constitutes authorised (legitimate) and unauthorised collaboration (collusion) for specific assessment tasks, seek advice.

Understand that the distinction between what needs to be acknowledged and what is common knowledge is not always clear. As you gain experience you will learn the acceptable practices for acknowledgment in the disciplines in which you study, but while you are learning, always play safe and acknowledge.

Keep a printed (hard) copy and (where possible) an electronic copy of all of your submitted work to assist you in case you ever need to answer an allegation of plagiarism. This is important for your own protection against possible misuse of your submitted assignment by another student and against possible suspicion of plagiarism if you ever have to resubmit an assignment that has 'gone astray'. If your original assignment has been lost, stolen or damaged, you must be able to produce it again as needed, without undue delay.