

Quoting: how to quote, what to quote

Why is quoting important?

Quoting research during an essay is essential. It both lends weight to your argument, and ensures you're not trying to pass someone else's words off as your own. Credit your research, and you may quote it as much as you like to back up your own ideas. Remember that quoting is different from paraphrasing or summarising; help in these areas can be found on different tip sheets.

What layout should I use?

Here's a quick guide to the Harvard Standard referencing system, which is used across the majority of colleges and universities.

Begin by stating the text from which you are about to quote, with the date of its publication in brackets. Put the title in italics and the quote in quotation marks. For example:

In *The Women's Room* (1977), Marilyn French begins, "Mira was hiding in the ladies' room."

Then follow the quote with brackets citing the author's surname, initial, year of the quote's publication, and the page number on which it's found:

In *The Women's Room* (1977), Marilyn French begins, "Mira was hiding in the ladies' room."
(French, M, 1977, p7).

This type of quote can appear as an integrated part of your main text, as it's not too long. However, if you need to quote a paragraph, you must separate it from the body of the text, indent and single-space it:

In *The Women's Room* (1977), Marilyn French begins:

Mira was hiding in the ladies' room. She called it that, even though someone had scratched out the word *ladies'* in the sign on the door, and written *women's* underneath.
(French, M, 1977, p7)

You'll notice that there are no quotation marks here; they are replaced by the indenting of the text in longer quotes. As far as quotation marks go, it's acceptable to use double or single according to preference, as long as you're consistent throughout.

What about my bibliography?

At the end of your essay, all sources quoted must be listed alphabetically in a bibliography, be they books, websites or films. Each is written in the following order: Author's surname, forename, year of publication, title, name and location of publishers. Notice the punctuation and use of italics here:

French, Marilyn 1977. *The Women's Room*, Jove Books, New York.

Finally, be sure you quote accurately, and cite experts whose words will give credibility to your arguments and ideas.

For more information, please visit these web addresses:

http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/academicsupport/documents/Library/Citing_References.pdf

<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/WWW/STUDY/Refer.htm>

References:

French, Marilyn 1977. *The Women's Room*, Jove Books, New York.

Summarising someone else's words

Why summarise?

Essay writing is a skill that demands a condensed, concise and yet thorough communication of ideas. The more established ideas and theories you can present to enrich your own argument, the more weight it will carry – and thorough research also demonstrates that you know what you're talking about.

So, in order to present a good variety of examples or ideas without going way over your word limit, you must be able to summarise other people's theories, whilst remembering that you cannot pass them off as your own. If you need to mention a theory that is not central to your argument but related to it peripherally, summarising is a good way of outlining it without veering from the main flow of your essay. Remember, it's not the same as quoting and paraphrasing; help in these areas can be found on different tip sheets.

How do I summarise?

Anything that isn't your own work or idea must be credited to its author. However, it is possible to discuss other writing without the use of lengthy quotations; you just need to remember to source whatever text or theory you're summarising. For example:

In his essay 'Death of the Author' (1967), Roland Barthes argues that a text can never be truly original, but is instead a tapestry of the culture and language that has already gone before it.

Here, you are attributing a basic theory to the author without having to quote large passages that may break the flow of your essay. The summarised text must still be cited in your bibliography, but can be a useful way of mentioning theories without having to veer off into great detail.

The most important things to remember are to put your summaries into your own words, and to credit each with its author. Don't summarise a theory from memory; find its source and attribute what you're saying to whoever's idea or concept it originally was.

How else is summarising useful to me?

Summarising is an effective way of laying the theoretical foundations from which you can build your argument; it gives a general overview quickly, highlighting only main points. It also demonstrates that you have a sufficient grasp of an idea to put it into your own words, rather than simply quoting something without being able to explain it.

For more information, please visit the following web pages:

<http://www.sfu.ca/~horban/qps1.htm>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_quotprsum.html

References:

Rice, R. and Waugh, P. (1994) *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, Routledge, London.

How and when to paraphrase

What is paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing means putting something someone else has said into your own words. Please note that it is different to quoting and summarising, both of which are discussed on different tip sheets.

When you paraphrase, you must be absolutely sure that you are putting the ideas under discussion entirely into your own words, as you are otherwise quoting rather than paraphrasing. Never try to pass another's work off as your own. The source of the paraphrase, properly cited, must appear at the time of paraphrasing and in your bibliography at the end of the essay.

When should I paraphrase?

Unlike when quoting, paraphrasing means there's no need to break the flow of your writing. Also, it helps to understand a theory or idea – and to demonstrate that you do – when you put it into your own words. But remember, if you copy the words of an author too closely, you can be accused of plagiarism EVEN if you attribute the words to your source. Paraphrasing means re-writing a theory in your own style and sentence structure.

Here is a direct quote from *How Proust Can Change Your Life* (1997), by Alain De Botton:

There are few things humans are more dedicated to than unhappiness. Had we been placed on earth by a malign creator for the exclusive purpose of suffering, we would have good reason to congratulate ourselves on our enthusiastic response to the task. (De Botton, 1997, p2)

And here is an incorrect paraphrase:

'There is nothing human beings are more dedicated to than unhappiness. In fact, if we had been placed here by a malign creator just to suffer, we would have good reason to congratulate ourselves on the enthusiasm of our response to the task.' (De Botton, 1997, p2)

Despite the reference at the end, this passage is far too close to the original. A correct paraphrase would be:

'In *How Proust Can Change Your Life* (1997), Alain De Botton opens by suggesting that all human beings, as a general rule, embrace unhappiness and suffering as though it were their purpose in life (De Botton, p2).'

This example is different to the original quote in both structure and words, and the proper referencing of the text also helps to demonstrate that the entire idea, however briefly described, is being attributed to De Botton's book.

For more information, please visit the following web addresses:

<http://www.sfu.ca/~horban/qps1.htm>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_paraphr.html

References:

De Botton, Alain, 1997. *How Proust Can Change Your Life*, Picador, London.

Secondary referencing: what is it and when should you use it?

What is secondary referencing?

Secondary referencing happens when you are quoting from a text that itself references other authors or texts. This means that you might find yourself quoting from a text you haven't actually seen first hand. It should be noted here that, ideally, you will look at an original text whenever possible; if an author is quoted within a text, try to find the original source of the quote and read it for yourself, as it is always best to know the context of an idea first hand. If you employ secondary referencing too much, it's likely to be pointed out to you by your tutor and can be considered lazy if used incorrectly.

When should I use secondary referencing?

Sometimes the source of a quote is not accessible, or perhaps not pivotal to your essay and so not worth spending time unearthing, simply to make a minor point. In this situation, you will want to make use of secondary referencing. It can be useful when you only wish to mention something in passing. Here are two examples of secondary referencing:

In his essay, 'On Impurity: the Dialectics of Cinema and Literature', (2003, in *Literature Criticism and Theory*, 2004, p150) Colin MacCabe says that 'it is impossible to give a serious account of any twentieth-century writer without reference to cinema'.

Or, for longer quotes:

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!

(Keats, 'Ode To A Nightingale', 1819, in *Literary, Criticism and Theory*, 2004, p24)

As this demonstrates, you must cite the source you have read, plus the original name and date of the quote under discussion. It is important that you do not claim to have read the original text unless it's something you've seen first hand, in which case there will be no need for the secondary reference. In example two above, it could be argued that the original source of the poem could easily be found, and should thus ideally be quoted from directly.

In your bibliography, a secondary reference appears only as the text you have actually seen. So, both examples above would be referenced simply:

Bennett, A and Royle, N, 2004. *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Edinburgh, Longman.

For more information, please visit these online pages:

<http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/management/external/els/quickread/Citing%20and%20referencing%20secondary%20sources.pdf>

<http://asp.wlv.ac.uk/Level6.asp?UserType=9&Level6=91>

References

Bennett, A and Royle, N, 2004. *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, Edinburgh, Longman.

Copyright fair use: what is it and when can it be used?

When does copyright apply?

Copyright can apply to any original piece of creative work that you produce, be it essays, poetry, film, music, a novel, or even a scribble of text in note form. And once you have produced a piece of original work, the copyright on it lasts your lifetime plus an additional seventy years. You cannot, however, apply copyright to a thought or idea – it must appear in tangible form in some capacity. And once something is copyrighted, the author has power to control how the material is used. For more detailed advice on copyright, please refer to the tip sheet that deals with the subject specifically.

What is fair use?

Fair use allows texts, music, film – and any creative work – to be publicly discussed or criticized. This makes reviews and recommendations possible, and gives you the ability to draw on all resources necessary to substantiate your arguments and ideas when essay writing. Without it, no copyrighted material would be available to you. However, the way in which you quote or comment on a creative work must be deemed by the author to be 'fair'. This is difficult to define even by lawyers, but can be contested by an original author under law.

How does this apply to me?

If you feel that an original creative work of yours is being reproduced, adapted or copied unfairly and without your permission, you can object to it under the law. You can also demand the right to be named as the original author of a work; this might arise if you felt that another person was earning an income from your original work, and owed you financially. Fair use makes it acceptable to quote other authors in a scholarly capacity, so that during your career as a student you are free to draw on texts of all kinds, as long as you adhere to copyright fair use law.

How do I work within the fair use law?

As a student, you have the right to access thousands of texts and authors, and to quote, criticize and discuss them as part of your academic work. Just make sure you credit your authors correctly (for how to reference quotes properly, please refer to the tip sheet on this subject), and do not reproduce any creative work in such a way that it might be considered offensive to its original author.

For more information, please visit these websites:

<http://fairuse.stanford.edu/index.html>

http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p01_uk_copyright_law

References:

Copyright and Fair Use, 2007 [online]. Available at:
http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter9/index.html [Accessed 11/07/2007]

Moral rights of authors: what are they and how do they affect you?

What are moral rights?

Every author has the right to have the integrity of his or her work maintained, so that their name is not attributed to something that does not remain true to an original piece. They also have the right to publish a work anonymously or under a false name, and to prevent the alteration of anything they produce that might damage their reputation or standing. Your moral rights as an author last for the duration of your life, after which the number of years they may still apply can vary.

Here is an official list of moral rights, and how they might apply to you as an author:

(From <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/moralrights/index.php>)

The right of attribution

The author / creator / director of a work has the right to be identified as such. Before this right can be enforced, it must have been previously asserted or claimed, e.g. a statement to this effect can often be found on the reverse of a book's title page. However, for staff and students, it is good practice always to appropriately acknowledge the author / creator / director of a work, regardless of whether this right has been claimed.

This right does not apply where an employer of an author is the first owner of the copyright and approved the publication or use of the work.

The right of integrity

The author / creator / director has a right to object to derogatory treatment of their work, e.g. alterations, additions, deletions etc. which might be judged to distort or mutilate it.

This right does not apply where an employer of an author is the first owner of the copyright and approved the treatment of the work.

This right and the right of attribution described above last for the same period as copyright – usually 70 years after the author's / creator's / director's death.

False attribution

Any person has the right not to have work knowingly falsely attributed to them as author / creator / director.

This right lasts until 20 years after a person's death.

How does this apply to students?

As a student, you must be sure to credit authors appropriately, using the correct name, and never to reproduce any work in such a way that it might be considered offensive to the original author.

For more information, please visit the following web addresses:

<http://www.caret.cam.ac.uk/copyright/Page91.html>

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/moralrights/index.php>

References:

'Moral Rights', 2007 [online]. Available at: <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/moralrights/index.php>. [Accessed 05/07/2007].

Plagiarism detection software: what is it and why is it used?

What is plagiarism detection software?

With the amount of information available to you through texts, articles, essays and the Internet, it's difficult to detect whether or not a person might be handing in someone else's work as their own. This is plagiarism, and is considered a very serious offence by most colleges and universities. Access to information on the web has led to the development of Plagiarism Detection Software.

Plagiarism Detection Software is used to compare a piece of writing to millions of others in order to detect whether or not it's original. It can sometimes even detect plagiarism through a person's style being similar to someone else's, and can compare both archived and contemporary works to one another. It can even archive all essays submitted for processing, enabling the software to keep a record of all original works that pass through the system.

An example of plagiarism

Here is an original quote from John Seely in *The Oxford Guide to Writing and Speaking* (1998):

Some areas of punctuation are clear-cut and straightforward. For example, no one would disagree that a sentence should begin with a capital letter. Other points are much more a matter of opinion and style: commas and semicolons, for example. (Seely, J. 1998, p218).

And here is an example of plagiarism:

Many areas of punctuation are straightforward and clear-cut. For example, we'd all agree that a sentence should begin with a capital letter. Other points are more a matter of style and opinion however: commas and semicolons, for example.

This is plagiarism because:

- The author and text have not been cited
- The words and sentence structure are barely different from the original

Plagiarism Detection Software would pick this up with no problem. For more detailed information on what constitutes plagiarism, please see the tip sheet that deals specifically with this subject.

So... how can I avoid plagiarism?

The most important thing to remember is to reference every quote or theory that is not your own work. Separate other author's work from your own, and make it clear to your reader whenever you are quoting, summarising or paraphrasing another person's words. To learn more about how to do this properly, have a look at the tip sheets that deal specifically with those issues.

To find out more, please visit these websites:

<http://www.plagiarism.org/>

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

References:

Seely, John 1998. *The Oxford Guide to Writing and Speaking*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Referencing Internet pages and images: how and when

When should I reference an Internet source?

This is just as important as referencing any text you might draw on during an essay, and failing to cite an Internet page or image can equally be classed as plagiarism. Even if you are using a web page for general information without quoting directly from it, you must still credit the author of the page and reference it in your bibliography.

In fact, with the development of Plagiarism Detection Software, it is now easy to discover whether or not someone has used the Internet without sourcing their information; similarities between your writing and some else's online will be picked up. So, whether you're referring to an image or text online, be diligent about stating clearly where it came from. For more information about Plagiarism Detection Software, have a look at the tip sheet that discusses it specifically.

How do I reference an Internet source?

You needn't be daunted by using research taken from the Internet; referencing here carries the same principles as referencing any text or image, citing the author's name where possible, the date you viewed the page, the name of the page and web address (URL). Here's an example:

In the article, *Citing References Using the Harvard Style* (2007), the Kingston University Website states that, 'It is important when you write an assignment that you acknowledge the sources from which your information or ideas came.'

In your bibliography, the reference would appear like this:

Kingston University (2007), *Citing References Using the Harvard Style*, [online]. Available at http://www.kingston.ac.uk/library/using_the_library/general/harvard.htm [Accessed 10/07/2007]

You must remember to state the date on which you viewed the article, as web pages are updated and altered regularly.

For your bibliography, rather than copying down a complicated URL from the tool bar at the top of the page you're looking at, simply highlight it and press Ctrl C (this will copy it), then click where you want the address to go on your essay and press Ctrl V (this will paste it).

Online images should be viewed as quotes, and referenced in the same way as Internet pages:

Cheetah, Hunting Leopard, *Acinonyx jubatus* (2005). [Online image]. Available at <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/cats.htm> [Accessed 10/07/2007]

For more information, please visit these websites:

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/library/training/referencing/harvard.htm#web>

http://www.kingston.ac.uk/library/using_the_library/general/harvard.htm

References:

Kingston University (2007), *Citing References Using the Harvard Style*, [online]. Available at http://www.kingston.ac.uk/library/using_the_library/general/harvard.htm [Accessed 10/07/2007]

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/cats.htm> [Accessed 10/07/2007]

Using the apostrophe: when and why

What is an apostrophe?

An apostrophe can be used in two ways, and yet using it incorrectly is one of the most common errors a writer can make. The apostrophe is used:

- To signify the omission of a letter
- To signify the possessive nature of a noun or pronoun

It's very important to use the apostrophe correctly, as getting it wrong can completely change the meaning of your writing. For example:

Those are my dogs

means something different to:

Those are my dog's

The first line means 'those dogs are mine', whereas the second means 'those belong to my dog'. It may seem simple, but it's easy to make mistakes with the apostrophe that can make your writing seem clumsy or lazy.

Usage one: the omission of a letter

We are all familiar with words such as haven't, didn't, and so on, and it's easy to see how the apostrophe is simply being used to replace a missing letter. Sometimes the apostrophe replaces more than one letter:

Shall not = shan't

Cannot = can't

Or on road signs we might see:

S'hampton for Southampton.

Usage two: the possessive noun or pronoun

This usage demonstrates that something (or someone) belongs to something (or someone). For example:

- That is Richard's drink
- My wife's hat blew off
- The mountain's peak is a long way up

Trouble can occur when we begin to look at plurals, as these are often muddled in with the possessive use of the apostrophe. Here are some **incorrect** insertions of the apostrophe:

- Take a look at our menu's
- The Kennedy's went on a family holiday
- A sign of the time's

The meanings here are all wrong – examples one and three leave us hanging, with nothing belonging to the possessive apostrophes. 'Our menu's dishes' might make more sense, or 'the time's changes'. But to keep the original intended meaning, simply take out the apostrophes. As for the middle example, it looks strangely as though the word 'went' belongs to the Kennedys.

Finally, with words ending in 's', the possessive apostrophe can either be added after the last letter:

That was James' cake

Or, a second 's' after the apostrophe can be added:

That was James's cake.

Either is acceptable.

To learn more, please visit these websites:

<http://www.apostrophe.fsnet.co.uk/>

http://www.bris.ac.uk/arts/skills/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_10.htm

Simple report structure: what and how

What is a report?

A report is different to an essay in that it is designed to present researched information that can be acted upon. Reports are a comprehensive compiling of facts; for example, you might write a report summarising feedback taken from questionnaires, or, in an academic setting, reports can be used to evaluate progress based on grades and student performance. Report writing is different from essay writing; advice on this can be found on different tip sheets.

How long should a report be?

This varies depending on how much you have to say. However, one solid and general tip is to try as best you can to keep your reports concise. As with all writing, long-windedness is to be avoided where possible, and reports are easier to read and digest if they are efficiently written. So once you have finished your report, try editing it down.

You are writing to put across information, so do it as clearly and concisely as you can for easier communication.

How should I structure my report?

This can vary according to your audience and content. It's often worth asking the person the report is for what they expect it to look like, so that you can conform to style. However, a classic structure would look like this:

- Table of contents (for easy navigation)
- Summary (at-a-glance outline for readers)
- Introduction (what's it about?)
- Body of the report (split into headings to make it more digestible)
- Conclusion (general bringing together of overall findings)
- References (cite all sources used)

The use of headings and subheadings throughout your report is what will make it differ from usual essay formatting. But it's important to break your information down into a structure that can be easily followed, with clear and relevant sub-sections to guide the reader through. Bullet points can be useful too, making your information instantly accessible and easy on the eye.

What else should I remember?

Always consider your audience. Who is the report for? Students? Tutors? Both? Keeping this in mind will help you to get the tone, language and structure of the report right, and it's always worth planning these elements before you start. Having your way mapped out will help combat any mental blocks as you go along, and your information will find an order more easily.

For more information, please visit these web pages:

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Skills/pack/report.html>

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/library/skills/report.html>

Getting answers from Google: Google search tips

Google searching is easy, isn't it?

The Internet is a huge place, filled with millions of pages. So, it's important to keep your search specific from the start, which means carefully selecting which keywords to put into your Google search engine.

Please note that we are discussing basic search tips here - to find out about Google Scholar, please refer to the relevant tip sheet.

Keywords – search engine tips

(From www.google.com/help/basics.html#keywords)

1. Be specific

Don't simply type the word 'Shakespeare' into Google, for example; be more specific. If you're writing about Othello, you're probably discussing a particular scene or theme, and someone out there will probably have written on the same topic. Perhaps it's the symbolic nature of the handkerchief in the play. So be narrow: 'Othello handkerchief' in the search engine will cut out pages of irrelevant information.

2. No common words

Leave out words such as 'and', 'the', or 'where', as these will be ignored by the search engine and could slow down your results. You might want to find the answer to the following question:

When did Oscar Wilde go to prison?

But instead try:

oscar wilde chronology

3. Punctuation and capitals

As a general rule you needn't spend time creating sentences to put into Google (see examples above), as the search engine doesn't need punctuation or capitals. You can just focus on keywords, and Google will do the rest.

However, if it's a specific, exact sentence you need to find, put your keywords into quotation marks, and the search engine will know you're after exact words or phrases.

4. Keywords with more than one meaning

If you need to research 'palms', as in the ones you have on your hands, you can stop the search engine from finding pages about palm trees by using a minus sign like this:

palms –trees

You can do this with any alternate meaning of a keyword, and Google will narrow your search.

Finally, if you want to define a term as it appears within the context of the web, simply type the word define, followed by a colon, followed by the word you want defined:

define: fraternity

Google will then bring up thousands of web pages on which your word appears, helping you to put it into every possible context.

For more tips, please visit these websites:

<http://www.google.com/help/basics.html#keywords>

<http://www.google.com/help/refinerearch.html>

References:

Shakespeare, William (nd). *Othello*, Penguin, London, 1994.

The Essentials of Google Search, 2007. [Online]. Available at:
<http://www.google.com/help/basics.html#keywords>. [Accessed 10/07/2007]

Using Google Scholar for research

What is Google Scholar?

Google Scholar is a database filled with scholarly literature, comprising of articles, journals, essays, books and more. Students are more likely to find the specific information needed here when it comes to essay writing; it is more specialised than a standard Google search. To find tips on using the standard Google search engine, please refer to the tip sheet that deals with this specifically.

How do I search Google Scholar?

(From <http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/help.html>)

1. Searching for an author

Firstly, put the author's name into quotation marks, as this will tell the search engine that you're looking for someone specific. To broaden your search to the full, use only the initial of the author (the initial and surname will appear more frequently in results than the full name):

“v woolf”

If this brings up too many pages, type the word 'author' with a colon behind the name:

author: woolf
or
author: v woolf

This will narrow your search.

2. Searching for a title

Again, put the title of the article, journal etc you're looking for in quotation marks, and Google Scholar will find it along with other pages that mention it:

“a room of ones own”

Remember you don't need to use punctuation or capitals for the search engine to find what you're looking for.

3. Searching for the most recent research on a topic

At the edge of your search results pages, there is an option to click on 'recent articles'. As it suggests, this will bring up all the most recent articles on the subject you're researching, helping you to find the most relevant pages without the use of further keywords.

4. Related Articles

Beside most of your search results, you will see a 'related articles' link, which will take you to articles whose content most closely relates to what you've been searching for. This can be a quick and easy way to find out more about your subject without having to re-search.

Advanced Searching

(From http://scholar.google.com/advanced_scholar_search)

The Advanced Scholar search allows you to be more specific in your research, with options to insert author, publication, date, subject areas and exact words or phrases. So if you're looking for something very specific or obscure, the advanced search can be the most efficient way of finding it.

To find out more, please visit:

<http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/help.html>

<http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/refinerearch.html>

References:

Google Scholar Help 2007 [online].

Available at: <http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/help.html>.

[Accessed 11/07/2007]

Advanced Scholar Search 2007 [online].

Available at: http://scholar.google.com/advanced_scholar_search.

[Accessed 11/07/2007]

Recording research: what to record and why

References, (or citations), directly refer your reader to the different sources you have based your work on. All academic writing requires the author to use references, and it's much easier to record your sources at the research stage as you go along.

This area of academic writing can often seem like a minefield of different advice, but if you're organised and structure your research in a coherent fashion, the information you record before you start writing will make citing sources very simple. To record your research properly for citation purposes, you'll also need to use a good old-fashioned notebook.

What information to record

The most common system of referencing is the Harvard Standard, used in most western academic institutions, and this tells us what we should be recording in our notebook as we go through our research.

In combination with a bibliography at the end of your work, the Harvard Standard enables you to place citations in brackets next to the source you are referencing. This material may come from books, magazines, videos or newspapers – and the information being cited may be presented in the following forms:

- Quotations - telling the reader what publication it came from
- A longer extract - highlighting where you got your ideas from
- An interpretation - giving evidence from a source to back your line of argument
- A fact or piece of information - informing the reader where this originated

When you come to write your essay, report or dissertation, such references will be presented in a specific format. For example, a quotation will be cited like this:

“Abbreviation is the general term used to describe any shortened word” (Bryson, B. 2002 p1)

This 'in-text' reference using the Harvard Standard, puts the author's name and initial, the edition year and the page number in brackets next to the quotation. This information then links to the bibliography in the following format:

Bryson, B. 2002 *Troublesome Words*, Penguin, London

In the bibliography, we have recorded the author's surname and initial, the same edition year as above, the publication title (underlined or in italics), the publisher and place of publication. Each bibliography entry is then placed alphabetically by author.

(More information about using quotations and secondary references can be found in other tip sheets).

Recording research as you go along

For each of the reference types mentioned above, you will therefore need to record various pieces of information as you progress through your research. It's important to do this as you go along, because coming back to dig out sources at the end can create more work.

Using the Harvard Standard, this would mean writing a draft bibliography in your notebook, including the following details on where quotes, longer extracts, interpretations or facts come from:

- The author's surname and initial
- The edition year, (the copyright date)

- The publication title (in italics or underlined)
- The publisher
- The place of publication

Don't forget to write down the page numbers for the actual quotes, longer extracts, interpretations or facts – together with all the relevant information above. When you then come to start writing, you can easily refer back to your research and cite references from your notebook.

What to look out for

According to which academic institution you're studying at, conventions for recording references, and indeed the Harvard Standard itself, can be slightly modified in certain circumstances. For example, some institutions require the referencing of sources to be carried out differently in essays, than in academic reports or dissertations. With this in mind, it's always best to refer to the citation guidance issued by your own university or college, and take note of how your tutors want sources to be referenced before you start researching your work.

If you do find you have started writing and a reference has been missed, don't panic. As you're writing, make a further numbered checklist in your notebook, with corresponding numbers within your work – and check back all the missed citations at the end. Usually, you will have only forgotten to cite a few sources, (if any), and they can be simply slotted in using the Harvard Standard as outlined above.

There are also specific ways of citing sources from newspapers, articles and journals, as well as quotes or extracts from one author quoted by another, and even for referencing sources without clear authors. This will all determine what information you will need to record in the research stage. Please refer to the websites below for further details.

For more information, please visit these web addresses:

<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/WWW/STUDY/Refer.htm#HarvardStandard>

<http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>

References:

Bryson, B. 2002 *Troublesome Words*, Penguin, London

Verifying sources: how to identify authoritative sources & where to look

When researching a piece of academic writing, it's often unclear as to where you can find authoritative sources to reference from, and what constitutes an authoritative source in the first place. In this instance, your first course of action should be a visit to your university or college library.

The most obvious source of 'authoritative' source material will be published in book, journal or academic paper form by your own or another academic establishment, and will be easily traceable by subject matter. Through correct use of citation and recording of sources in bibliographies, you will then quickly be able to expand your reading list on any given subject – knowing that the starting point for your network of research began with credible sources.

One word of warning, don't start your research on the Internet unless you're very sure of what you're doing, and trust the website you intend to reference from. Most online content is open source, badly researched and not written by experts in a given academic field – and you could end up misquoting, misrepresenting or worst of all – writing plain inaccuracies.

The importance of peer review

Peer review normally applies to the publication of scholarly journals or articles, conference papers, and the award of research grants and contracts. It is the process of subjecting an author's work to the scrutiny of specialists within their field.

This process ensures that the intellectual ideas, references and arguments within the published work are accurate and authoritative in the context of perceived current knowledge, as specified by a collection of experts who have studied the subject matter in academic detail.

Although peer review can never provide truly definitive source material in the literal sense, if you quote from a peer reviewed source when writing your essay, dissertation or report, your reference material will be seen as unquestionably authoritative in the academic sense. This is also true of the network of further sources you find as a result of studying the bibliography of a peer-reviewed publication.

Source credibility checklist

In the context of peer review, most published journals and academic papers in your university library will be credible and safe to cite from. However, if you're unsure, (and your college or university does not provide guidelines on the matter) use this checklist to verify the authority of both the source and the author.

(From <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/findarticles/credibility.html>)

1. Who is the author and what are their credentials?
2. What is the author's reputation among his/her peers?
3. Who is the publisher and when was the source published?
4. Is the author associated with a reputable academic institution or organization?
5. Does the author exhibit a particular bias?
6. Does the information appear to be well researched and well organized?
7. Has the author used good grammar?
8. Are there spelling or typographical errors?
9. Is the information complete and accurate?
10. Is the content appropriate for your research topic or assignment?

This checklist is especially useful in ascertaining if website sources are credible. Wikipedia is a great resource for example, but do not cite sources you find on this or similar sites without first checking their authenticity. (Wikipedia is peer reviewed in an open source process by the wider web community, but it is not

yet fully classed as an academically verifiable source of credible information).

What types of sources are credible?

In more general terms, you can also determine the credibility of sources just by virtue of what format they are published in. This is a short cut to finding and using sources that you can be 99% certain are authoritative.

You can reference from sources with confidence if they are:
(From <http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/vl/scholar/scholprin.htm>)

- Peer reviewed
- Published/edited by a university or scholarly society
- Written by an author from a university or scholarly society
- Reporting research
- Written with a bibliography to reference other works
- Written by more than one author
- Presented at a conference, particularly an international one

Take care when using the following sources for referencing:

- Newspapers
- Magazines and trade journals
- Newsletters
- Very short articles of one or two pages
- Articles that have no bibliography
- Unverified websites

Critical judgement

Ultimately, determining the credibility of sources is down to your own critical judgement. If you are unsure as to the authority and suitability of any given source, either use the checklists above or consult your course tutor for guidance. Don't just forget about verifying sources, however, as this could ultimately effect the credibility of your own piece of academic writing.

For more information, please visit these websites:

<http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/vl/scholar/scholprin.htm>

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/rowland.pdf

<http://valinor.ca/peer-review.html>

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/findarticles/credibility.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable_sources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_review

References:

Monash University Library [online].

Available at: <http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/vl/scholar/scholprin.htm>

[Accessed 12/07/2007]

University of Oregon Libraries [online].

Available at: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/findarticles/credibility.html>

[Accessed 12/07/2007]

Copyright: what is copyright and when to use it

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, copyright is 'the exclusive legal right to publish, perform, film, or record literary, artistic or musical material.' (Soanes, C. 2001 p190). This applies as much to the original material you're writing as to anything else. So how does copyright affect your work when you're researching or writing an academic essay or dissertation? It seems the answer boils down to a simple sense of fair play.

Fair dealing

The first point to make is that for private study and non-commercial research, the principle of 'fair dealing' applies to copyright material. It is perfectly acceptable in this context to make sparing copies of copyright material without the holder's prior consent. To do this you can use a photocopier, scanner or even a mobile phone camera – just as long as you follow a few simple guidelines as to how much you copy.

You can make copies of copyright material within these boundaries:

(From: <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/students/index.php>)

- A single section or several extracts from a book, not exceeding 5% of the entire work
- One chapter of a book
- A single article from a journal or newspaper
- One conference paper
- A single case from a collection of law reports
- Poems and short stories less than ten pages long
- Up to 10% of a British Standard
- An A4 sized section of a map, copied up to four times

Copyright material not covered by fair dealing includes:

- Sound recordings, films and broadcasts (even for private study)
- Course material distributed by your tutors (this could breach your university's copyright licences)

After you have copied the material you are allowed to use under the fair dealing rules, you must then also take care not to distribute or re-publish the material in any way, even for fellow students.

Dissertations, essays and course work

Should you wish to include copyright material, such as photocopies of pictures, photos or maps in your own written work, you are fine to do this provided you cite the source material properly. (Please see the sheet on 'Quoting' and 'Recording Research' for more information).

When publishing or exhibiting work with other copyright sources contained within it, you must gain the written permission of the copyright holder before you proceed.

Copyright on the Internet

Copyright laws cover all material on the Internet. Under the terms of fair dealing, you can make one copy of a website page for private academic study or non-commercial use, but only in accordance with the quantity guidance above. Equally, if you're publishing your own original material on the Internet, you can indicate it is protected by copyright by adding the statement, © [Your name] [The year] – eg: © John Smith 2007.

You shouldn't download and share music from the Internet as this could cause legal problems for both yourself and your academic institution. Equally, if you're publishing your own web pages, then don't copy somebody else's design and content, as this would be breaking copyright law. And if you have any doubts about any content you want to use from websites, ask permission from the site owner first.

The legal consequences of breaching copyright

With the proliferation of digital media and online content, copyright breaches are being treated with increasing seriousness by copyright holders. One only needs to consider the case of the music industry versus open source download site 'Napster', to be aware of the risks of infringement.

Common recompense for breaching copyright includes:

(From <http://www.caret.cam.ac.uk/copyright/Page23.html#Topic46>)

- Paying damages
- Injunctions on copying, exhibiting or broadcasting the material
- Orders to hand over any profits gained from using the material
- Confiscation of all copies made
- Fines or imprisonment (in serious cases)

Although none of the above should unduly worry students preparing essays and dissertations, it definitely makes sense to consult your college or university's guidance on copyright.

If in doubt, ask permission

In most cases, following the fair dealing approach to copyright should protect you, especially when researching or writing a piece of academic work. However, if you ever have doubts about copyright issues, especially in the context of where your work will end up being published, you should always seek the advice of your tutor. If you still find yourself in a grey area, the alternative is to contact the copyright holder and ask their written permission to use sections of their material. This would be the fail-safe way of protecting yourself, your work and your college or university.

There are also specific rules governing the copying of CD Roms, slides and photographs, sound and video recordings and overhead projection transparencies. If your academic establishment does not provide clear guidance on these issues, then the follow sources will be useful.

For more information, please visit these online resources:

<http://www.publishers.org.uk/paweb/paweb.nsf/0/A0652CC0A41D7E7080256AD800540BD1!opendocument>

<http://www.cla.co.uk/>

http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p01_uk_copyright_law

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/students/index.php>

<http://www.caret.cam.ac.uk/copyright/Page23.html#Topic46>

References:

Soanes, C. 2001 *Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Staffordshire University, A Students' Guide to Copyright [online].
Available at: <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/copyright/students/index.php>
[Accessed 12/07/2007]

University of Cambridge, Intellectual Property and Copyright in the Digital Environment [online].
Available at: <http://www.caret.cam.ac.uk/copyright/Page23.html#Topic46>
[Accessed 12/07/2007]

Proofreading: what is proofreading and how to do it

Proofreading, or 'proofing', is the thorough, careful review of the final draft of your essay or dissertation, ensuring all errors have been corrected. These errors can either be grammatically or contextually based, and will suggest a lack of effort on your part if not omitted.

Proofreading is an acquired skill that is not hard to learn, but does take some practice. Once you have developed your own 'routine' for proofing text – this will stand you in excellent stead for all future writing you produce.

How to proofread a document

Proofreading has to be factored into the time it takes to research, write and correct your work. This is because the first element of proofing is to forget your text as soon as you've produced it. Go and get a cup of coffee, or even leave it overnight – but make sure you come back to your work with fresh eyes.

When you return to proof your document, it's best to make a hard copy and edit it by hand, as onscreen editing can be confusing. Have a dictionary and thesaurus to hand, plus preferably a simple grammar guide. You'll also need your notebook as mentioned in the sheet on 'Recording Research'.

These steps, used as one process, should help you become a skilled proofreader:

1. Familiarize yourself with the errors you commonly make by looking over writing that has already been marked. Make a list of your errors, and check your writing for each of them.
2. Carefully and slowly read your writing out loud. Often your ear will hear what your eye did not see.
3. Read your writing, sentence by sentence, from the last sentence to the first sentence. This technique interrupts the logical flow of the prose and neutralizes any impression of correctness arising from your knowledge of what you meant to say.
4. Use your dictionary to check any words of which you are unsure, and to check for correct prepositions, verb tenses, and irregular forms.

(Lunsford, A. & Connors, R. 1995)

Common grammatical errors

Here are some common mistakes to look out for when checking for grammatical errors in your work:

- Check the spelling of commonly misspelled words – like ‘there’ and their’ (plus your own list of common spelling errors)
- Check punctuation for the correct use of commas, apostrophes and full stops
- Avoid clichés – such as ‘thinking out of the box’
- Cut unnecessary adjectives (words describing a person, place or thing)
- Lose unnecessary adverbs (words that modify a verb)
- Keep paragraphs and sentences short, and don’t use a long word when a shorter one will do
- Try to use the ‘active’ rather than the ‘passive’ voice, (unless the passive gives more emphasis). For example, ‘John rode the bike’ is an active sentence, whereas ‘The bike was ridden by John’ is passive. Using active sentences helps make your writing clearer and more vibrant
- Cut repetitions of words occurring near one another in sentences, unless the word is being used to make a point
- Make sure the **subject** and **verb** of each clause or sentence agree, for example ‘A central **part** of my life goals **has been** to go to college’
- Ensure your use of verb tenses remains constant, for instance ‘After he **joined** the union, Sam **appeared** at a rally and **made** a speech’

(Lunsford, A. & Connors, R. 1995)

Proofreading for context

When you’ve completed a proofread to correct spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, (using the steps outlined above), it’s good practice to go back through your work and check that everything fits into context. By this, we mean returning to the title and subject of your essay or dissertation and checking that your content fits with your overall thesis and line of academic argument. If everything fits together coherently and you’ve clearly said what you wanted, where you wanted – plus all the grammatical and spelling errors have been corrected – you’ll be looking at a really tightly presented piece of work.

Spell checking in “Word”

Just one final point about spellchecking in ‘Word’ – by far the most commonly used word processing software in colleges and universities.

After you’ve finished all the stages above, make sure you highlight all the text in your Word document, select the appropriate language for the spell check from ‘Tools’, usually ‘English (UK)’, and click ‘OK’ for the language to be set – this can take some time if you’ve got a long document. You’ll be alerted by a small red tick at the base of the Word frame when this is done.

Save your choice of language and then do your spell check. Word has a nasty habit of not making your chosen language ‘stick’, so it’s best to do this for every final draft.

There really is no excuse for not at least performing an accurate spell check in the correct language, and your tutor will soon notice if you’ve not done so.

For more information, please visit these web addresses:

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/proofing_grammar.shtml

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_edit.html

<http://cal.bemidjistate.edu/WRC/Handouts/ProofAndEdit.html>

References:

Lunsford, A. & Connors, R. 1995 *The St. Martins Handbook*, St Martins

Plagiarism, allusion & collusion: what are they and how to avoid them

Instances of plagiarism, allusion and collusion are often treated as just harmless 'copying' by many students, yet your university and the wider academic community take these issues very seriously. There is a degree of confusion about what these terms actually mean, but the three concepts can be explained as follows:

- Plagiarism is to use or steal someone else's ideas without properly crediting them
- Allusion is to pass reference to or indirectly mention someone else's work or ideas without citation
- Collusion is to produce work with someone else and then present it as your own original ideas

Often, students become worried that 'over referencing' in an essay or dissertation will make it appear as if they've not done enough work. But it is precisely the appropriate citing of sources that will make your own analysis and argument stand out, giving your own ideas greater weight as a result. So, the general rule of thumb to avoid plagiarism, allusion and collusion is: 'If in doubt, cite it'.

Different types of plagiarism, allusion & collusion

Put simply, plagiarism in its many forms is fraud. There's no easier way to ruin your chances of a good grade than to steal other people's work and ideas. And in case you're considering using a lack of understanding of the issues in your defence, tutors won't accept ignorance as an excuse.

Here are some common types of plagiarism:

(From http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_plagiarism.html)

- Turning in someone else's work as your own
- Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- Changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

These examples in bullet points have been taken directly from another source, so we must cite that source appropriately. In this case, we have referenced the source <http://www.plagiarism.org> directly in the text, and we must remember to also put this source in our bibliography at the end.

If we cite appropriately, the central issues of plagiarism and allusion can be avoided, although collusion cannot be covered by proper citation. In this instance, you're just better off just not copying your friend or colleagues work in the first place. There's nothing to stop collaboration on a project, but you can write up the results of that joint work independently.

As a general rule, the following instances always require referencing:

(http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_citation.html)

- Whenever you use quotes
- Whenever you paraphrase

- Whenever you use an idea that someone else has already expressed
- Whenever you make specific reference to the work of another
- Whenever someone else's work has been critical in developing your own ideas

(For further information on quoting and referencing, please refer to the relevant tip sheets covering this subject).

Preventing plagiarism

As we mentioned above, ignorance is often the cause of plagiarism – but will not be taken as an excuse for it. Your own college or university will have ample guidelines on how to avoid stealing other people's work and ideas, as well as about appropriate citation. Before you start researching your essay, report or dissertation, it's a good idea to check these guidelines as a matter of priority.

With the proliferation of online content, plagiarism has become a major issue in both academic and wider fields, yet the digital age has also brought with it some valuable tools to help minimise fraud. Many academic institutions now use plagiarism detection software to catch offenders. (Please see the relevant tip sheet for further details). This is ultimately a positive step forward. You really don't have anything to worry about if you have stated where your quotes, ideas and lines of argument come from. The difference between a stolen passage of a source book, and an important addition to your thesis - can ultimately be the difference between two quotation marks and a Harvard Standard citation in brackets by its side.

Preventing plagiarism really starts at the research stage of your work. If you formulate your own independent views and lines of academic argument, and only use sources to highlight aspects of your own thinking – your work will be truly original. It's a case of being prescriptive as to the sources you use, letting your work inform what sources you choose and not allowing the sources to dictate your ideas. And if you properly note down all your sources as you go along, and cite them properly within the text, you should cover yourself when your tutor comes to run your work through the latest version of their plagiarism software.

For more information, please visit these websites:

http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_plagiarism.html

http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_citation.html

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/physics/teaching/phy216/plagiarism.html>

<http://www.murdoch.edu.au/teach/plagiarism/>

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>

Sources

Plagiarism.org [online].

Available at: <http://www.plagiarism.org>

[Accessed 16/07/2007]

Using JISC resources for research: what are they and how to access them

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), was established by the UK Government in 1993. Its role is to support higher education and research for students over the age of 16, and promote the use of Information Communications Technology. In this capacity, it provides access to a large number of extremely useful sources of information that students and teachers can use for research and educational development.

The strategic framework for these valuable information sources covers eight key areas:

1. e-Learning
2. e-Research
3. e-Resources
4. e-Administration
5. Access management and security
6. UK research and education network
7. Convenient access to resources
8. Engagement of business and the community

How to find JISC sources

Your university or college will pay a license fee for each of the JISC resources, which you will be able to access through their internal intranet system. Please ask your tutor for further details or refer to your academic institution's guidelines for more information.

JISC Collections, for example, houses a huge list of varied resources of great value to students and academic institutions. Once you've accessed the system, you'll find the research and e-learning sources will be broadly arranged in five categories:

- Arts and Humanities
- Health & Life Sciences
- Science, Engineering & Technology
- Social Sciences
- Multidisciplinary resources (including encyclopaedias and reference titles)

These subscription based services, (paid for by your academic institution), enable you to draw information from sources as diverse as contemporary art listings, ordnance survey maps and classic literature collections. You will also have access to wider collections of information such as the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online and Early English Books Online. You can search through the sources as easily as if you were surfing the Internet.

Not only can students use the information as research sources for essays and dissertations, but tutors from licensed colleges and universities can use the resources for teaching purposes too. However, the JISC does have its own rules on citing quotes and passages from the information that you find on the various listings.

Referencing JISC resources

If you find a source that you want to quote from, there are strict guidelines that you should follow regarding citation. (From http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/model_licence/coll_guide_jiscmodel.aspx#17)

Students can cut and paste parts of the online resource in printed or electronic form in projects, portfolios and in dissertations. Students must include the details of the source, title listing and copyright owner in their coursework.

In line with the Harvard Standard for citation (please refer to the relevant tip sheet), the above rule would also include a full reference in the bibliography of your work.

Furthermore, the JISC is clear on what both staff and students should not do when quoting or referencing from its source material.

(From http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/model_licence/coll_guide_jiscmodel.aspx#17)

You must not:

- Make the online resource available off-site to anyone other than staff and students
- Remove or hide or change copyright notices or remove acknowledgements
When 'cutting and pasting' extracts from the online resource, any form of acknowledgment associated with the item must be included, e.g. copyright caption with an image
- Allow the online resource to be viewed in any way other than by authorised access or on the institution's secure network
- Use the online resource for commercial use or for any purpose other than educational purposes
- Display any part of the online resource on a publicly accessible website or network

Multiple resources

As we have mentioned above, the JISC sources you will have access to will not just include textual information. The collection also includes vast libraries of film, photographs, maps and sound recordings.

Together with JISC Collections, the body also delivers other services to academic institutions, namely Janet, a high speed Internet, domain name and video conferencing provider, JISC Legal, the Plagiarism Advisory Service, the Satellite Image Data Service and even NVQ Hairdressing Training.

Accessing JISC's multiple resources through your college or university intranet will put an enormous wealth of research and educational information at your fingertips, and provided you use appropriate citation for the extracts you use in essays, reports and dissertations – JISC's resources could be the most valuable you make use of as a student.

For more information, please visit these web addresses:

<http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/>

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jisc>

Sources

[jisc-collections.ac.uk](http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/) [online].

Available at: http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk

[Accessed 17/07/2007]

Online thesaurus, dictionary and encyclopaedia: how to use them and pitfalls

A simple Google search will soon show you a vast array of online thesauri, dictionaries and encyclopaedia. Yet, some are obviously better than others, especially when it comes to credibility in terms of citation. If you can't be sure the source you're using is authoritative, then you can't rely on the definition or explanation given – and certainly shouldn't quote from dubious sources in essays and dissertations. So how do we get round this?

The first place to start, ironically, is offline – with the existing credible names in the world of the thesaurus, dictionary and encyclopaedia. Many highly credible resources like the Oxford English Dictionary, the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Roget's Thesaurus have been successfully digitized. Collins and Cambridge dictionaries are also online too, while the Web has thrown up its own array of purely online resources. Some of these require you to register for use, and some are easier to use than others - so let's have a look at the best of the online thesauri, dictionary and encyclopaedia on offer.

Dictionaries

The Oxford English Dictionary (Found at <http://www.oed.com/>)

You're guaranteed no problems with authority of sources or credibility here. The 'definitive record of the English language' is the oldest and possibly most trusted dictionary in the world.

The online version requires either individual or institutionally paid subscriptions in order to search the database. If your university or college is signed up, you should use this resource as your first port of call. An individual membership is cheaper, and still worthwhile – but if you don't want to pay there are other, cheaper alternatives.

Oxford Dictionaries (Found at <http://www.askoxford.com/>)

AskOxford lets you complete a free search of the Compact Oxford English Dictionary – using a simple search bar on the right hand side of the homepage. The function is simple and 'no frills', but it does provide you with authoritative definitions and you don't have to worry about credibility - a good choice for a quick definition check.

Cambridge Dictionaries Online (Found at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>)

Strictly a language teaching resource, Cambridge Dictionaries Online nevertheless lets you carry out free searches of its authoritative dictionaries, and not only provides definitions but examples of use.

You can also search different types of dictionary, such as Learner's, American English, Idioms and Phrasal Verbs. There is also a facility to search a French/English or Spanish/English version.

Again, there are no concerns about credibility with such a renowned resource, and the search process itself is quick and easy.

Collins Dictionaries (Found at <http://www.collinslanguage.com/>)

Another world famous dictionary, the Collins online resource lets you search up to 450,000 words in the English language. The website is well laid out and easy to use, but you will need to buy a print version of the Collins Concise English Dictionary in order to get an access code for the online version. Once you're logged in though, credibility is not an issue.

Thesauri

Roget's Thesaurus (Found at: <http://www.bartleby.com/thesauri/>)

By far the best online thesaurus is based upon by far the best offline one. Created in 1805, Dr. Peter Mark Roget's Thesaurus originally contained some 15,000 synonyms. The latest version, released into the public domain and accessible from a variety of sources, contains over 35,000.

A widely accepted credible source of synonyms, you can always trust this resource.

Encyclopaedias

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (Found at <http://www.britannica.com/>)

Again, one very famous encyclopaedia stands out for its authority, and the online version benefits from this instant credibility.

To search the full 32 volume edition requires a free trial subscription followed by a paid membership. There are cheaper options online, but this is an extremely valuable source of information on any subject you wish to explore for your essay, report or dissertation.

Combined resources

Dictionary.com (Found at <http://dictionary.reference.com/>)

Possibly the best all-round resource because its searches are free and cited to a variety of authoritative sources – including many of the above. Dictionary.com allows you to search a massive database of dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopaedias, reference materials and the Web as a whole.

The site is simple and effective to use, and searches reveal a list of different definitions and information – all verified and appropriately referenced from trusted sources.

Growing in popularity, this resource combines all the benefits of the sources previously mentioned - just make sure your search results are in UK and not US English if you want to quote from them.

For more information, please visit these web addresses:

<http://www.oed.com/>

<http://www.askoxford.com/>

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

<http://www.collinslanguage.com/>

<http://www.bartleby.com/thesauri/>

<http://www.britannica.com/>

<http://dictionary.reference.com/>