

Reporting Verbs

This resource is designed for English Language Learners (ELLs) who require assistance in a particular academic skill. Each handout provides brief explanations related to different core skills (reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking), and it offers some simple examples of mistakes and how these might be corrected.

While these handouts are designed primarily for ELL students, anyone seeking to improve their writing may find these documents useful. Check out the links at the end of the handout for more resources.

What is a reporting verb?

A reporting verb is a verb that you use to refer to sources or cite quotations.

Examples:

She **says** that she will be home late.

The teacher **recommended** that the student go to the library for more sources.

In academic writing, you use reporting verbs to describe other people's research or activities. Very often, in academic writing, reporting takes place in the present tense; this is because of the need to bring the past research into the present moment.

Choose an appropriate reporting verb

"Say" is a great reporting verb in conversations, but academic writing has many more requirements. In academic writing, a reporting verb is used to cite sources of information like journal articles and books.

Different reporting verbs have more or less strength: they can emphasize or de-emphasize an argument. The strong verb conveys a much more forceful idea than a neutral one, so it changes how you report on an author's research. There are three kinds of reporting verbs:

Strong: make a point that the author is completely sure of and wants to emphasize.

Uncertain: verbs that authors use when they are not totally sure whether the points are true but want to use them as parts of the arguments

Neutral: a factual description that the author uses to explain the terms of an argument. There is no value judgment for or against an argument.

For example, "to argue" is a strong verb, while "to suggest" is a neutral one, and "appear to think" is an uncertain one.

Dr. Berman **argues** that more research is necessary.

The strong reporting verb "argue" in the example shows certainty and emphasis. It means Dr. Berman believes strongly that more research is needed.

Dr. Berman **appears to think** that more research is necessary.

The reporting verb “appear to think” in the above example shows that Dr. Berman may believe that more research is necessary, but he is still hesitant.

Five Sentence Patterns for Using Reporting Verbs:

Use one of these five sentence patterns to incorporate an information source into your writing.

1. Reporting verb + that

- The research **suggests that** bilingualism enhances cognitive development.
- Klein **concludes that** both experiments are flawed.

2. Reporting verb + preposition

- Lee **disagrees with** other scientists.
- Zhou **warns of** the possible consequences of this decision for the industry.

3. As + somebody + reporting verb

- **As Ali recommends**, regular exercise can prevent heart disease in elderly people.
- **As Wu warns**, sunscreen needs to be used half an hour before going outside.

4. Reporting verb + noun

- Kennedy **supports the studies**.
- Phillips **refutes his colleague’s argument**.

5. Reporting verb + somebody/something + as

- Berry **shows the approval process as** flawed.

Strong	Neutral	Uncertain
advocate affirm announce argue articulate assert attack blame complain condemn contend criticize declare demonstrate denounce deny deride dispute emphasize establish expound highlight insist maintain mock object to reason recommend	accept acknowledge add agree analyze assess clarify compare concur confirm consider contrast define describe discuss estimate evaluate examine explain explore find identify illustrate indicate inform investigate justify note suggest	assume appear to think doubt guess imagine question seem to believe speculate suppose

Practice Exercises:

Choose the best reporting verbs for the following sentences. Look up the verbs in a dictionary if you are not sure of their meanings:

1. "Your stomach problem doesn't seem too serious. But if you're really worried about it, you'd go to the hospital to get an examination," Brett said to me. Brett _____ me to go and see a doctor.		
warned	accepted	advised

2. "I hate taking notes for this class! The professor speaks too quickly." Clara _____ that <u>note-taking was too difficult.</u>		
complained	indicated	Recommended
3. "Class, you are not allowed to bring your study guides into the final exam." The teaching assistant _____ to the class that <u>students could not use their study guides.</u>		
conceded	mentioned	announced

4. "It's not safe to bicycle at night without using a bike light. Without one, you would be breaking the law." His roommate _____ that he use a bike light.		
disputed	insisted	interpreted

5. "Arsenal football club won the European Cup last year." The sportswriter _____ that Arsenal won the European cup last year.		
affirmed	speculated	investigated

6. "Why don't we get a group of us together to go see a movie?" Jordan _____ a group of <u>friends that they go to see a movie.</u>		
justified to	highlighted to	suggested to

7. "I know I cancelled our shopping trip," Jonah told Gerald, "But I hurt my ankle." Jonah _____ Gerald why he cancelled their shopping trip.		
recommended to	explained to	objected to

8. <u>Although a few doctors question the need for confidentiality, most healthcare professionals accept that patient records are private.</u> The report _____ most doctors accept <u>confidentiality rules.</u>		
investigated that	emphasized that	supposed that

9. "You're right, Karina," said John. "If I don't insist on getting paid, my boss will not give me my wages." John _____ Karina that he had to ask for his wages.		
doubted	agreed with	emphasized to

10. <u>After many months of waiting, Lisa finally heard that the government accepted her application for a work visa.</u> Lisa _____ that she received a work visa.		
confirmed	evaluated	thought

Answers:

1. advised
2. complained
3. announced
4. insisted
5. affirmed
6. suggested
7. explained
8. emphasized that
9. agreed with
10. confirmed

More resources for reporting verbs

Verbs for referring to sources – UofT Writing Advice

<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/english-language/referring-to-sources/>

Verbs for reporting – University of Adelaide

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/sites/default/files/docs/learningguide-verbsforreporting.pdf>

Reporting verbs – University of Technology Sydney

<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/grammar/reporting-verbs>

Develop your academic language, improve your academic skills, and get a Co-Curricular Record notation. Attend the Professional English Language Skills (PELS) workshops:

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/professional-english-language-skills-pels>

Get feedback on your writing and discuss your thought process. Book an appointment with an instructor: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/appointments-undergraduate>.

Looking for more learning strategies? Visit us at: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/>.