

Verbs for Reporting

Writing Centre Learning Guide

In academic writing, you will often need to refer to the research of others, also called secondary sources. A reporting verb is a word which is used to talk about or report on other people's work. Reporting verbs can be used to great effect, but the difficulty with using them is that there are many, and each of them has a slightly different and often subtle meaning.

Introduction

In academic writing, it is important to present an argument logically and cohesively. You may be required to:

- comment on someone's work
- agree or disagree with someone else's study
- evaluate someone's ideas

Often you will be assessed on your ability to demonstrate these skills.

It is repetitive and boring to write 'Smith says...' over and over again. Fortunately, there is a wide choice of reporting verbs in English. Reporting verbs can indicate:

- the author's personal viewpoint
- your viewpoint regarding what the author says
- the author's viewpoint regarding other literature.

To interpret the writer's ideas accurately, however, you will need to use a verb with the correct nuance (sense of meaning). Use an English learner's dictionary to check that you have the right verb for the right context.

Function and strength of reporting verbs

Some verbs are weaker in their function, while others are strong. Some verbs are followed by a preposition (e.g. as, to, for, with, of), while others are followed by a noun or 'that' (see page 3). In addition, some verbs can fit more than one category e.g. *warns* can be used to disagree with, emphasise or examine an idea.

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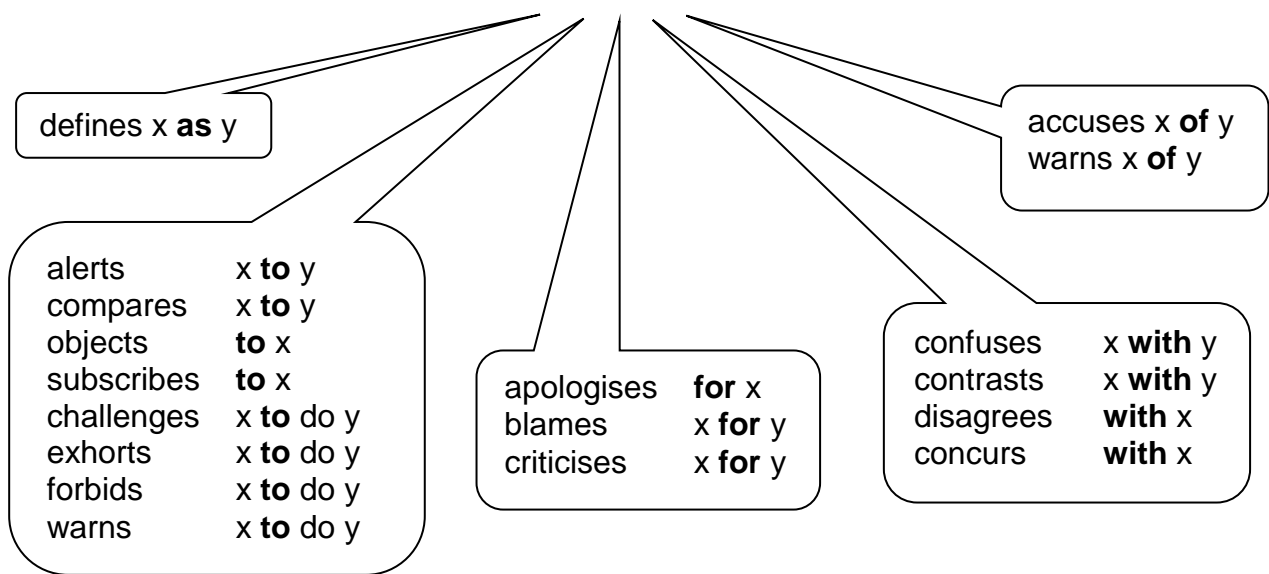
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Common reporting verbs for academic writing

It is important you understand and know how to use the verb correctly before placing it in a sentence, and that you use past or present tense as appropriate.

	weaker position	neutral position	stronger position
addition		adds	
advice		advises	
agreement	admits, concedes	accepts, acknowledges, agrees, concurs, confirms, recognises	applauds, congratulates, extols, praises, supports
argument and persuasion	apologises	assures, encourages, interprets, justifies, reasons	alerts, argues, boasts, contends, convinces, emphasises, exhorts, forbids, insists, proves, promises, persuades, threatens, warns
believing	guesses, hopes, imagines	believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks	asserts, guarantees, insists, upholds
conclusion		concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realises	
disagreement and questioning	doubts, questions	challenges, debates, disagrees, questions, requests, wonders	accuses, attacks, complains, contradicts, criticises, denies, discards, disclaims, discounts, dismisses, disputes, disregards, negates, objects to, opposes, refutes, rejects
discussion	comments	discusses, explores	reasons
emphasis			accentuates, emphasises, highlights, stresses, underscores, warns
evaluation and examination		analyses, appraises, assesses, compares considers, contrasts, critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands	blames, complains, ignores, scrutinises, warns
explanation		articulates, clarifies, explains	
presentation	confuses	comments, defines, describes, estimates, forgets, identifies, illustrates, implies, informs, instructs, lists, mentions, notes, observes, outlines, points out, presents, remarks, reminds, reports, restates, reveals, shows, states, studies, tells, uses	announces, promises
suggestion	alleges, intimates, speculates	advises, advocates, hypothesises, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorises	asserts, recommends, urges

Verbs followed by a preposition



Verbs followed by a noun or -ing form

analyses, applauds, appraises, assesses, attacks, considers, contradicts, critiques, debates, describes, discards, disclaims, discounts, discusses, dismisses, disregards, evaluates, examines, explores, expresses, extols, forbids, highlights, identifies, ignores, illustrates, investigates, justifies, lists, opposes, outlines, praises, presents, questions, refutes, rejects, restates, scrutinises, studies, supports, underscores, uses, validates, verifies

Verbs followed by 'that'

accepts, acknowledges, adds, admits, advises, advocates, agrees, alerts, alleges, announces, argues, articulates, asserts, assures, believes, boasts, claims, clarifies, comments, complains, concedes, concludes, confirms, feels, finds, forgets, guarantees, guesses, hopes, hypothesises, imagines, implies, indicates, infers informs, insists, justifies, knows, maintains, notes, observes, persuades, points out, posits, postulates, promises, proposes, proves, questions, realises, reasons, reasons, recognises, recommends, remarks, reminds, reports, reveals, shows, speculates, states, stresses, suggests, suspects, tells, theorises, thinks, understands, urges, warns

Example sentences

Remember that the tense you use for your reporting verb will depend on your style guide. Some styles prefer present tense while others prefer past tense.

Boynton (1982, p. 79) warns the reader that ordinary chocolate is 'too frail to withstand heat, moisture and proximity to baked beans'.

Hanks (2004, p. 257) defines an idiom as an expression whose 'meaning . . . is distinct from the sum of its parts'.

Smith (2005) disagrees with Fry (2003) when she maintains that many students have trouble with reporting verbs.

Some people subscribe to the idea that chocolate is unhealthy, but Boynton's (1982) book refutes this claim.

This paper investigates the effects of alcohol on memory and stresses that further research be done as a matter of urgency.

References

Boynton, S. (1982). *Chocolate: The consuming passion*. London: Methuen.

Hanks, P. (2004). The syntagmatics of metaphor and idiom. *International Journal of Lexicography*, 17 (3), 245-274.

Useful resources

Websites

<http://www.academicenglishcafe.com/reporting-verbs.html>

http://www.edufind.com/english/grammar/reporting_verbs.php

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/learning_english/leap/grammar/reportingverbs

<http://www.york.ac.uk/rop/verbs.html>

Printables

http://www.awc.metu.edu.tr/handouts/Verbs_to_Introduce_Paraphrases_and_Quotations.pdf

<http://www.york.ac.uk/rop/documents/reportingverbfunctions.pdf>