Acknowledging Sources in Academic Writing

In-Text References in the Author-Date (Harvard) System

It doesn’t matter whether what you take from another source is a long direct quotation (three lines or more), a short direct quotation (two lines or less), an indirect quotation, a paraphrase, or a summary—always say where it came from.

It is important to remember that when you take something from another source, you are taking it out of its original context and putting it into a new context—your own essay. You must make sure it fits properly into this new context. This means that:

- it must be relevant to your argument;
- it must join neatly with what comes before and after;
- it must make logical and grammatical sense.

In-text references are the references to the source of an idea/information made within the text (that is, not in a footnote) of an assignment. In the Author-Date style, references should contain only the following information, in this order: 1) the surname of the author; 2) the date of publication of the text; 3) the page numbers of the text (usually for direct quotations only).

Examples of in-text references:

1. Direct quotations

A direct quotation consists of the actual words used by an author, in the same order as the original. In other words, it is a copy.

1a. direct quotations of more than two lines

A direct quotation of more than two lines:

- is separated from the rest of the paragraph
- is indented at left and right margins
- is put in smaller point size
- does not use quotation marks
- includes page number(s) as well as author and date
- must be relevant to the passage
- must fit well in the context of your assignment
An important question to ask about modern language has to do with changes in the way language is used. Many people believe that the Americanisation of the media, and what is called dumbing down, is having disastrous results on English. One answer to this is that language has always been subject to change, just as everything else in the world is, and we should not feel that this is a bad thing. As Aitchison (1981) puts it:

Language, then, like everything else, gradually transforms itself over the centuries. There is nothing surprising in this. In a world where humans grow old, tadpoles change into frogs, and milk turns into cheese, it would be strange if language alone remained unaltered. In spite of this, large numbers of intelligent people condemn and resent language change, regarding alterations as due to unnecessary sloppiness, laziness or ignorance (Aitchison 1981:16).

Aitchison clearly sees every change in language as neither good nor bad, but inevitable.

1b. short direct quotations

A short direct quotation:

- is inserted directly into the text without separating it from the rest of the paragraph
- needs opening and closing quotation marks (single or double; be consistent)
- needs the page number.

Here is an example of the paragraph which has a short direct quotation inserted into it:

An important question to ask about modern language has to do with changes in the way language is used. Many people believe that the Americanisation of the media, and what is called dumbing down, is having disastrous results on English. One answer to this is that language has always been subject to change, just as everything else in the world is, and we should not feel that this is a bad thing. Aitchison (1981), for example, points out that language is subject to change, and is not caused by ‘unnecessary sloppiness, laziness or ignorance’ (p 16). Aitchison clearly sees every change in language as neither good nor bad, but inevitable.

2. Indirect quotations

An indirect quotation makes only minor changes in the wording. Do not use quotation marks; just incorporate it into your sentence.

Here is an example of the paragraph with an indirect quotation inserted into it:

An important question to ask about modern language has to do with changes in the way language is used. Many people believe that the Americanisation of the media, and what is called dumbing down, is having disastrous results on English. One answer to this is that language has always been subject to change, just as everything else in the world is, and we should not feel that this is a bad thing. Aitchison (1981), for example, points out that language is subject to change, and is not caused by ‘unnecessary sloppiness, laziness or ignorance’ (p 16). Aitchison clearly sees every change in language as neither good nor bad, but inevitable.
else in the world is, and we should not feel that this is a bad thing. According to Aitchison (1981:16), for example, language is gradually transformed over the centuries, and is not caused by sloppy, lazy or ignorant thinking, and therefore change should not be resented. Aitchison clearly sees every change in language as neither good nor bad, but inevitable.

[essay continues...]

3. Paraphrase

When you paraphrase, you use your own words. This is usually preferable to direct quotes, as the reference fits more neatly into your own style of writing. It also shows that you really do understand what the author is saying. However, you must take care that you don’t change the meaning.

Even when you use your own words, you must still acknowledge where you got the idea from.

Example:

[...continues from previous paragraphs]

An important question to ask about modern language has to do with changes in the way language is used. Many people believe that the Americanisation of the media, and what is called dumbing down, is having disastrous results on English. One answer to this is that language change is natural, so there is no reason for people to condemn it (Aitchison 1981:16). Aitchison clearly sees every change in language as neither good nor bad, but inevitable.

[essay continues...]

4. Summary

A summary gives an outline of the main points of a passage, chapter or book.

Example:

[...continues from previous paragraphs]

An important question to ask about modern language has to do with changes in the way language is used. Many people believe that the Americanisation of the media, and what is called dumbing down, is having disastrous results on English. However, one important study (Aitchison 1981) looks closely at the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic processes of language change over many centuries, and argues that changes in all aspects of language are natural and inevitable.

[essay continues...]

Making changes to direct quotations

You may want to make minor changes to a direct quotation. This is possible (as long as you don’t change the meaning), but you must follow the rules.

- If you omit parts of the quotation, whether from the beginning, middle or end, use an ellipsis. An ellipsis consists of three dots (…).
- If you want to insert your own words, or different words, into a quotation, put them in square brackets ([ ]).
- If you want to draw attention to an error in a quotation, for example a spelling mistake or wrong date, don’t correct it; write [sic] in square brackets.
• If you want to emphasise something in a quotation which is particularly relevant to your essay, put the emphasised words in italics, and state that the emphasis is your own.
• If the original has italics, state that the italics are in the original.

**Example showing different kinds of changes:**

Language changes are natural and inevitable. As Aitchison (1981:16) points out, language:

… gradually transforms itself over the centuries … In a world where [everything changes], it *would be strange if language alone remained unaltered*. In spite of this, large numbers of intelligent people condemn and resent language change…


Smith (1992), commenting on this, says: ‘Aitcheson [sic] appears to believe that *everything* changes; but this is questionable’ (Smith 1992:45, italics in original).

**What to do when you find a reference to one author in the work of a different author**

To acknowledge the ideas of one author which you have found in the work of another, your in-text reference must mention two names:

a. the author of the idea you are using, and
b. the source you have found it in.


However, your bibliography should only give details of the source that you found it in (in this case, Smith 1995).

**Incorporating references into your writing**

There are several ways of incorporating reference sources into your paragraphs. Look at the following passage:

One inconclusive study (Shrensky 1998) suggests that smaller dogs (those weighing 9 kgs or under) can be more easily taught to sing than larger dogs. Indeed, Shrensky claims that she has taught a choir of miniature poodles to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. However, these claims have been disputed as no-one has been able to replicate the experiment (Wilson & Collins 1999). According to Wilson & Collins, ‘the whole idea is a load of rubbish’ (Wilson & Collins 1999:55). Nevertheless, as Shrensky (1995) has noted in an earlier paper, these kinds of studies are almost impossible to replicate without a highly-trained, experienced specialist teacher to perform the task..............

There are several standard phrases you can use when you want to introduce a reference (whether a quotation, a paraphrase or a summary) into your essay or report. Learn how to use them, and watch the punctuation!

If you want to show you *agree* with the reference, or that it has *validity*:

• As Shrensky (1995) has noted in an earlier paper, poodles can be taught to sing.
• Shrensky (1995) demonstrates that poodles can be taught to sing.
• Miniature poodles can be taught to sing (Shrensky 1995)
If you want to show you disagree with the reference:

- Shrensky (1995) alleges/claims that poodles can sing.

If you want to remain neutral:

- According to Wilson & Collins (1999), Shrensky’s study is nonsense.
- Wilson & Collins (1999) say that Shrensky's study is nonsense.

Look in your textbooks and other reading material for other ways of introducing references.

**Using footnotes**

Sometimes you may have to use the footnoting system rather than the Author-date system. In the footnoting system, no citations are put into the text. All references are signposted with a small superscript number, and the citation appears at the bottom of the page with the relevant number.

**Footnoting conventions**

- At the first mention of a source, give the full reference (as it would appear in the bibliography/reference list), plus the page number if necessary.
  
  Note: The page number does not appear in the bibliography.

- For subsequent mentions, use one of the following abbreviations:

  (a) If the source is exactly the same as the one immediately before it, use the term *ibid*, plus the page number if that is different. ‘Ibid’ means ‘The same’.

  (b) If the source is not exactly the same as the one immediately before it, use the author’s name plus *op.cit*, plus the page number. ‘Op. cit’ means ‘In the work already cited’.

**Example:**

One study\(^1\) suggests that smaller dogs (those weighing 9 kgs or under) can be more easily taught to sing than larger dogs. Indeed, Shrensky\(^2\) claims that she has taught a group of miniature poodles to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. However, these claims have been disputed\(^3\) as no-one has been able to replicate the experiment; but it has been suggested\(^4\) that this may be because it takes a highly-trained and specialist teacher to perform the task.............


\(^2\) Ibid, page 77.


\(^4\) Shrensky, op. cit. page 23.