

Verbs for Referring to Sources

You can indicate your attitude to the sources you cite by choosing specific verbs to refer to them. Don't just keep repeating "Smith says." There is a wide choice of such verbs in English. Use a dictionary to check that you have chosen a verb with the nuance you intend.

Here are some grammatical patterns to follow in using these verbs:

Pattern 1: *reporting verb* + **that** + *subject* + *verb*

acknowledge	admit	agree	allege	argue
assert	assume	believe	claim	conclude
consider	decide	demonstrate	deny	determine
discover	doubt	emphasize	explain	find
hypothesize	imply	indicate	infer	note
object	observe	point out	prove	reveal
say	show	state	suggest	think

- (a) Da Souza **argues that** previous researchers have misinterpreted the data.
- (b) Researchers **have demonstrated that** the procedure is harmful.
- (c) Positivists **find that** social disorders are exacerbated by class factors.
- (d) Singh **infers that** both states are essential.

Note that these verbs all differ in meaning—they cannot be used interchangeably. For example, the verb *argue* in sample sentence (a) indicates your judgement that the author's conclusion is based on evidence and reasoning, but that other conclusions might be possible. The verb *demonstrate* in sentence (b) indicates your judgement that the researchers' evidence and reasoning are so convincing that no other conclusion is possible.

Beware of using the verbs *discuss* or *express* followed by *that*. For example, it is incorrect to write, "The reviewer expressed that the movie is not worth seeing." You can, however, write the following: "The reviewer expressed the view that the movie is not worth seeing."

N.B.: Verbs in this category may also appear in a subordinate clause beginning with *As*:

- (e) **As** Da Souza **argues**, misinterpretations by previous researchers need to be corrected.
- (f) **As** researchers **have demonstrated**, the procedure is harmful.

Pattern 2: *reporting verb* + *somebody/something* + **for** + *noun/gerund*

applaud	blame	censure	criticize	disparage
fault	praise	ridicule	single out	thank

- (a) Smith **criticized** Jones **for** his use of incomplete data (OR **for** using incomplete data).
- (b) Both Smith and Jones **condemn** previous researchers **for** distorting the data.
- (c) Banting **thanked** Best **for** his contribution to the discovery of insulin.

Pattern 3: *reporting verb* + *somebody/something* + **as** + *noun/gerund/adjective*

appraise	assess	characterize	class	classify
define	depict	describe	evaluate	identify
interpret	portray	present	refer	view

- (a) Jones **describes** the findings **as** resting on irrefutable evidence.
- (b) Smith **identifies** the open window **as** a source of contamination.
- (c) Smith and Jones both **present** their data **as** conclusive.