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Which reporting verbs should you use?

Your choice of reporting verb depends on the meaning you wish to convey. Some reporting verbs are neutral and give no indication of either the author's feelings or of your feelings about what the author said. Other verbs can indicate the purpose of the author and how strong the author's expression was. They can also indicate the extent to which you accept the author's views.

Verbs and other expressions neutral in meaning

according to	acknowledge	comment
define	describe	discuss
note	point out	state

Verbs that indicate the author's position on an issue

allege	argue	assert
challenge	claim	concede
defend	doubt	emphasise
endorse	take issue with	maintain
put forward	recommend	reject
refute	suggest	support

Verbs that indicate the author's thinking

assume	believe	consider
hypothesise	predict	recognise
take for granted	think	

Verbs that indicate the author is showing something

demonstrate	explain	illustrate
indicate	present	show

Verbs that indicate the author is proving something

confirm	establish	prove
substantiate	validate	verify

Verbs that indicate what the author did

analyse	apply	estimate
evaluate	examine	find
investigate	observe	study

Are there any grammatical rules that apply to reporting verbs?

Most reporting verbs can be followed by a 'that' clause. For example:

> Brown (1999) **argues that** the system has failed. Jones (2000), on the other hand, asserts that the system has had many successes.

However, some reporting verbs cannot be followed by a 'that' clause. They must be followed by a noun or noun phrase. For example:

> Smith (2001) **discusses the reasons** for the failure of the system.

Other verbs that must be followed by a noun or noun phrase are: define, challenge, defend, endorse, put forward, refute, take issue with, reject, support, present, illustrate,