ACE Quick Guide to Using Sources

Why Should I Use Scholarly Resources?

In all disciplines, **knowledge is developed by engaging critically with existing theories, concepts, and models** – exploring their potential strengths, limitations, and applications. When writing for academic purposes, you are therefore required to **read widely, demonstrating the extent to which research has informed your conclusions and recommendations for professional practice.**

What is Involved in Using Scholarly Resources?

1. Reading with Purpose

Once you have identified an appropriate scholarly resource, read with purpose – **evaluating the strengths and limitations of the findings in relation to your own professional practice.** You can use The Critical Thinking Model (University of Leeds, 2023) to expedite this process, keeping detailed notes.

2. Planning Your Writing

Would engaging with this source material strengthen your argument? If so, where could it be incorporated?

3. Selecting Material

Include only as much as is needed to support your argument or provide essential background information.

4. Deciding How to Incorporate the Material

You should **paraphrase when you are interested solely in the idea, and not the language used to express this idea**. Include a quotation when both the idea and the author's linguistic choices are significant. See the ACE Paraphrasing Quick Guide for additional support.

5. Referencing

Using your referencing guide, **include an in-text citation** to avoid plagiarism – making it clear where the paraphrase or quotation begins and ends. This will enable your marker to find the full publication details in your reference list.

How Can I Use Scholarly Resources in my Assignment?

It is not enough to simply mention a source in passing. You should integrate scholarly evidence both to support your arguments and to develop your critical position – comparing relevant differences, contradictions, or alternatives proposed by the wider academic community. You should also **explore the extent to which the findings apply to your own professional practice**. For example:

1. Supporting an Argument

Organisation X has a hierarchical culture, which can be defined as... (Schmidt, 2011).

Here, the writer is arguing that their organisation has a 'hierarchical culture' – employing Schmidt's description to support their conclusions.

The writer could strengthen this discussion by introducing additional sources as well as examples from their workplace to develop this line of reasoning.

Although Organisation X aligns with Schmidt's (2011) definition of a hierarchical culture in its decision-making processes, it also demonstrates the key characteristics of market culture (Ali, 2015). This can be seen in Project Y...

The writer acknowledges that whilst the first resource offers a partial explanation, it must be reinforced by a second for a better understanding of their organisation. By considering the extent to which these theories apply in practice, the writer may begin to develop a critical position.

2. Comparing Theoretical Viewpoints

Whilst Schmidt (2011) describes company-wide culture, Hartley (2013) explores the diversity of sub-cultures which emerge at departmental and team levels.

Here, the writer engages in comparative analysis, exploring relevant disparities, contradictions, or alternatives proposed by the wider academic community.

Hartley (2013) extends Schmidt's (2011) framework to account for departmental sub-cultures.

The writer clearly and succinctly explains how one source builds upon another.

Both examples could lead to further discussion regarding the extent to which these theories support – or, indeed, challenge – the writer's experiences at work.

3. Challenging a Theory with Reference to Practice

Patel (2020) advocates the use of cross-training to provide team members with exposure to new roles and responsibilities, but fails to account for the potential drawbacks, including inefficiency, underperformance and discontent. In Organisation X...

Here, the writer identifies a limitation of the theory in relation to their experiences in the workplace.

Although Singh (2018) foregrounds the importance of egalitarianism, the organisation could consider electing a chairperson to encourage cooperation when tasks are being allocated.

The writer proposes a recommendation based on their experiences in the industry – indicating why the theory should be regarded as less contextually relevant.

Using Scholarly Resources Phrase Bank:

Take care over your choice of verb as this will **suggest to the marker whether you agree or disagree** with the scholar's arguments. For example:

You are **neutrally** repeating the author's findings:
- Jones (2021) states...
- Taylor (2022) concludes...
- To determine the effects of X, Smith (2023) analyses...

You are **unconvinced** by the author's findings and / or their relevance to your own professional practice:
- Although Jones (2021) claims...
- While Smith (2023) questions the cost of X, Jones (2021) acknowledges the potential benefits, including...
- Although Taylor's model (2022) may benefit Organisation X in terms of... he appears to make some industry-specific assumptions which do not apply in the case of...

You **agree** with the author's findings and / or they are relevant to your own professional practice:
- As Smith (2023) demonstrates...
- This view is supported by Jones (2021), who confirms that...
- My experience in Organisation X is consistent with Taylor's (2022) model, perhaps because...

(Adapted from University of Manchester, 2023)

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Reference List

University of Leeds (2023) *A Model for Critical Thinking*. Available at: https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1401/academic_skills/105/critical_thinking/2 (Accessed: 13 December 2024).

University of Manchester (2023) *Referring to Sources*. Available at: https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/referring-to-sources/ (Accessed: 14 December 2024).

Additional Resources

The ACE Quick Guide to Evaluating Sources and Reading Critically offers additional guidance on reading with purpose and assessing the strengths and limitations of scholarly resources in relation to your own professional practice.

The ACE Quick Guide to Paraphrasing provides further advice on how to paraphrase scholarly arguments.

The ACE Critical Thinking Checklist includes a list of helpful questions and prompts to help you develop the skills of thinking, reading, and writing critically.

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