

A GUIDE TO GOOD REFERENCING

When you write literature reviews, essays and project reports you are required to do the referencing properly (and will be marked down if you do not). The standard scientific procedure is described below. It does depend on context. An essay that is meant to be entertaining and informative is written with different criteria from a project report where accuracy is essential. Conventions for both are given.

A Review Essay

- If you are writing an essay then it is obvious to all that you are drawing on published work. You are reviewing a field. No one will expect you to present original facts. Everything you write will have come from some published source or other. Your task is to understand the published work, organise the material well and put the ideas into your own words.
- At the end, give a list of your sources. This list should include everything you read and found helpful as well as those sources that provided figures or quotes. (You *may* choose to use the more rigorous procedure for longer literary reviews – see below. This would be good practice for what is required later, but is not required for an essay.)
- If you have read part of a number of *books* then they should be listed under the heading ‘Bibliography’ or ‘References’ at the end of the essay, including the publisher and the date of publication.
For example:
A P French and E F Taylor *An Introduction to Quantum Physics* (Nelson 1979)
[In a published article it is actually necessary to give the town of publication but this is excessive for a student essay!]
- If you refer to a *web site* it should be given with author as, for example, G.A Gehring: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/N-Q/phys/teaching/phy202/>
- If you *copy a figure* either by photocopying it, scanning it in or taking it from the web, you must say where it came from. For example it would be sufficient to say ‘ From French and Taylor ’ under the figure and then list French and Taylor in the bibliography as above. Alternatively you can list the sources for the figures at the end of the essay, for example, Figure 1 from
- Similarly, if you *sketch a figure* from a book then you should do the above, saying ‘Redrawn from ... ’.
- If you *quote* a sentence from any source it must be in quotation marks and the reference given in the text, for example, ‘ French and Taylor state “...” ’.

A Project Report

- If you are writing a project report then at least some of it – either the derivations and or data – will be original. All the rules given above apply, plus some extra ones. Your own work appears without reference and any other formula or figure that appears in the text needs to be carefully labelled so as to distinguish it from your own work.
- If you quote a formula from a book that you could not derive yourself then you should give the formula as, for example, French and Taylor 3.13.
- If in future years you are writing a longer literature review then it is standard practice to list your references. There are two ways of doing this.
 - (i) You can use *numbers*. Then, for example, you would write in the text.
‘It has been known for sometime [1] that ...’ ‘This was verified by measuring the photo-electric effect [2]’.
The full references that correspond to [1] and [2] would be given at the end in the section called References.
 - (ii) Alternatively you can refer to the authors by *name* in the text and then list them alphabetically at the end.
‘It has been known for sometime [Smith 1970] that ...’There is no preference between these schemes – astronomers and long review articles in physics use the alphabetical method, short articles in physics almost always use numbers.

Finally a word of warning: Plagiarism occurs if you quote results without referencing them or if your work is drawn from very few books or web sources or if you have one or more whole sentences taken from a source without quotation marks. In this electronic age it is easy to paste large quantities of text into an essay. We check for this.