

Verbs of Attribution

In this fact sheet you'll learn about how to use verbs to attribute statements, and why they're important.

The verbs we use to attribute a statement (eg Smith argues/claims/asserts/suggests etc.) are important because they indicate your reading of what the author is doing, and also your attitude to the claim made.

- Do you agree Smith is presenting fact? (Smith shows/demonstrates . . .)
- Can Smith's claim be challenged? (Smith claims/suggests/asserts/argues)
- Do you want to foreground other actions the author is doing? (Smith implies/challenges/questions/defines...)

It is important not only to understand the meaning of the verb of attribution, but also that it appropriately describes the action of the author. For example:

- Smith questions X; or
- Smith challenges X; or
- Smith concedes X; or
- Smith speculates that X;
- and so on.

It is very boring to keep saying 'Smith says!' You can be far more precise and indicate your reading of an author by choosing appropriate verbs of attribution carefully.

In academic writing we are engaging with the authors, not just reproducing what they say. We enter into a conversation about our topic, a conversation which is going on in the literature. Usually, especially at advanced levels, we are dealing less with facts and more with arguments and evidence. Your choice of verbs of attribution can reflect your stance towards the position taken by authors you engage with and contributes to the consistency and effectiveness of your argument.

Verbs of Attribution you might like to try to use in your written work:

accepts	challenges	defines	interprets	replies
accounts for	charges	denies	introduces	reports
acknowledges	cites	describes	lists	responds
addresses	claims	disagrees	maintains	reveals
adds	comments	discusses	mentions	sees
admits	compares	disputes	mumbles	shows
advises	complains	emphasizes	notes	speculates
affirms	concedes	endorses	objects	states
agrees	concludes	exclaims	observes	suggests
alleges	concur	explains	offers	supports
allows	confesses	expresses	opposes	supposes
analyses	confirms	finds	points out	thinks
answers	considers	grants	proposes	uses
argues	contends	hypothesizes	questions	utilizes
asks	contents	illustrates	realizes	verifies
asserts	criticizes	implies	reasons	whines
assumes	deals with	indicates	refutes	writes
believes	decides	insinuates	rejects	
categorizes	declares	insists	remarks	

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