



# SLU CALM Resources

## Academic Writing

### Reporting Verbs

These verbs communicate your attitude to your reader about what you are reporting. Of course, these verbs are sometimes used in more complex ways; try to notice and think about these as you read academic books and articles in the course of your study.

Below is a list of commonly used reporting verbs in formal academic writing, but of course there are many, many more. Don't just choose any reporting verb because their meanings are different. Make sure you know the meaning of a verb before you use it! For examples of ways to use each verb in a sentence click on the verb you are interested in.

**To argue** - the author has tried to persuade readers that something is true by using evidence and logic, but at this stage in your essay you do not want to say yet whether you agree or not.  
[Jin \(1999\) argues that providing safe injecting spaces is the best way to respond to the current wave of drug overdoses.](#)

**To challenge** – the author argues against an opinion of another person, but at this point in the essay you do not want to say whether you agree or not.  
[Hughes \(1998\) challenges the common belief that employees are most strongly motivated by money, in the light of some studies of her own.](#)

**To claim** - the author has made a simple statement of fact, which you do not agree with.  
[Giorgio \(1995\) claims that most eighteen year olds are intelligent. You might follow this sentence with something like: "However, Giorgio's definition of intelligence is very narrow."](#)

**To define** – the author has given a precise definition (if you want to include the definition in your own work use "as")  
[Mullaly \(1967\) defines ethics as "moral correctness"](#)

**To Describe** – the author has simply described a thing or a process and you want to refer to it. Describes is often used with 'as'  
Papadopoulos (1998) describes how the meetings of the group are conducted. She describes these meetings as "extremely well-organised" (page 32). (Note how when using a direct quote, the page number the quote was taken from is stated).

**To highlight** - the author has treated this particular thing as the most important and you want to refer to it.  
In his discussion of the types of users of accounting information, Fauve (1997) highlights the needs of the investor.

**To identify** – the author has named and described something or a few things and you want to write about what they are.  
Fauve (1997) identifies three major types of users of accounting information.

**To list** – the author has given a list and you want to refer to it.  
Nguyen and Tran (1998) list five possible approaches to this problem, a, b, c, d, and e.

**To maintain** - the author has tried to persuade readers that something is true by using evidence and logic, but you do not agree. Later in the paragraph or essay you will say you do not agree and explain why.  
Skolimowski (1987) maintains that university entry should be restricted to students with TERs of 90 or above, because many current students have difficulty in their first year.

**To refute** – the author argues that another person's theory or claim is wrong AND the author has succeeded in proving to this to you, so you now agree that the theory or claim is wrong (or you already had this opinion before you read what this author said)  
Opetai (1998) refutes the commonly accepted notion that aboriginal people accepted whites without struggle by listing hundreds of examples of resistance which occurred over a fifty year period in New South Wales.

**To show, to demonstrate** – the author has tried to persuade readers that something is true by using evidence and logic AND the author has succeeded in proving her/his point to you, so you now agree with her/him (or you already had this opinion before you read what this author said).  
Tran (1970) demonstrates that investment in tertiary education

has a strong beneficial effect on the country's potential for economic growth

**To state**      Jacobowicz (1997) states that child care is an unnecessary luxury. You might want to show how there is more than one author who states the same thing. For example: [Jacobowicz \(1997\)](#) and [Wright \(1999\)](#) state that child care is a luxury and not a privilege.

**To suggest**      – the author has put forward an idea for consideration but has not argued very strongly for it and you do not want to say whether you agree or not.  
[Stephenson \(1987\)](#) suggests that one reason for the increase in cases of tuberculosis may be the growth in movement between countries.