



Choosing which reporting verb to use

Introduction

Reporting verbs are words that introduce what a person has said, and can be used to introduce a direct or paraphrased quotation or a summary, but with so many reporting verbs available, it can be difficult to choose the right one for the situation. The tasks on this sheet should help you think about which verbs to use in your writing. Answers can be found on pages 3 and 4.

Pick the most appropriate reporting verb to fill in the blank. The first one has been done for you.

- 0) Gentz (2014) _____ that the majority of the sample was in favour of raising the national minimum wage.

argued	stated	reported
--------	--------	----------

- 1) Owens (2012) _____ that there were still some flaws in his questionnaire design.

asserted	conceded	proposed
----------	----------	----------

- 2) Smith and Wilson (2015) _____ that almost two thirds of the respondents had rented a private property.

found	argued	claimed
-------	--------	---------

3) Mitch (2016) _____ that although the government had a duty of care for vulnerable adults' welfare, they were not responsible for housing everyone.

concluded	illustrated	stated
-----------	-------------	--------

4) Wilkes (2013) _____ how the use of technology could enrich learning through her study by ...

purported	demonstrated	observed
-----------	--------------	----------

5) Hawk (2012) _____ that the difference in findings between groups A and B could be caused by the difference in educational backgrounds, although ...

suggested	asserted	reported
-----------	----------	----------

6) Jones (2016) _____ the importance of piloting questionnaires in order to ensure findings are relevant and usable, even for small-scale projects.

highlighted	commented	reported
-------------	-----------	----------

7) McKinster (2013) _____ a new fund which could be used to aid families with low income, which could be managed by local charities.

conceded	discussed	proposed
----------	-----------	----------

Answers

- 1) Owens (2012) **conceded** that there were some flaws in his own design.

Proposals are usually limited to introducing something new (e.g. an idea or a call to action), and as Owen is accepting that something of his is imperfect, we can call this a concession rather than an assertion.

- 2) Smith and Wilson (2015) **found** that almost two thirds of the respondents had rented a private property.

As this verb introduces a result of research, “found” is better to use than the other options. “Argued” is not appropriate as there is no opposing point or contention in the writing, and “claimed” suggests that there is no evidence provided or available.

- 3) Mitch (2016) **concluded** that although the government had a duty of care for vulnerable adults’ welfare, they were not responsible for housing everyone.

Although “stated” can also be used, the statement is providing a conclusion, so the more specific verb should be used to make clear the purpose of the reference. “Illustrated” should not be used, since the sentence does not show support for a specific claim.

- 4) Wilkes (2013) **demonstrated** how the use of technology enriched learning through her study by ...

As “purport” is similar to “claim”, it does not fit with the rest of the sentence. Similarly, as this sentence clearly introduces a study rather than an observation, “observed” does not fit as it introduces findings. “Demonstrated” fits as it explains what the study does, but in a **passive** structure.

Answers continued

- 5) Hawk (2012) **suggested** that the difference in findings between groups A and B could be caused by the difference in educational backgrounds, although ...

As “asserted” shows certainty, and “reported” is used for stating findings or results, neither of these options fit with the “could be” showing uncertainty in the second line of the sentence. For this reason, we should use “suggested”, which has a similar level of caution to “could be”.

- 6) Jones (2016) **highlighted** the importance of piloting questionnaires in order to ensure findings are relevant and usable, even for small-scale projects.

Again, “reported” is used for results, and therefore does not fit in this sentence. “Commented” could be used, although it would require another word – usually “on” – to follow it to remain grammatically correct. Highlighted is often followed by phrases such as “the importance”, as it is usually only key points that are highlighted.

- 7) McKinster (2013) **proposed** a new fund that could be used to aid families with low incomes, which could be managed by local charities.

As mentioned earlier, “conceded” is used to admit a counter-point rather than introduce new ideas. “Discussed” is not appropriate as the reference puts forward a (new) idea rather than “discussing” it, which could involve weighing positives and negatives. This idea being put forward is the reason we use “proposed”.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:
lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub

