Academic Research and Writing

Harvard Referencing & Critical Analysis

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Undergraduate Diploma in Business Administration

Harvard Referencing Style in Academic Writing

Applying the **Harvard Referencing Style** accurately means consistently citing sources within the text and providing a complete reference list at the end of your work.

Examples:

One author: (Smith, 2022)

Two authors: (Smith and Jones, 2022)

Three or more authors: (Smith *et al*., 2022)

Direct quote: (Smith, 2022, p. 45)

Example in a sentence:

According to Smith (2022), effective communication improves team performance.

Harvard Referencing Style in Academic Writing

Reference list: Place the reference list at the end of your document in **alphabetical order** by the first author's surname.

Book: Smith, J. (2022) *Academic Writing Skills*. 3rd edn. London: Pearson.

Journal article: Brown, T. and Green, P. (2023) 'The impact of digital learning on student performance', *Journal of Higher Education*, 18(2), pp. 112–128.

Website: World Health Organization (2024) *Mental health*. Available at: https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health (Accessed: 17 July 2026).

Harvard Referencing Style in Academic Writing

General rules

- Ensure every in-text citation has a matching entry in the reference list.
- Include page numbers for direct quotations.
- Italicise book and journal titles.
- Arrange references alphabetically by author surname.
- Be consistent with punctuation and formatting throughout the document.

Common Abbreviations used in Referencing and Citations

Understanding and applying **common abbreviations** in referencing and citations helps ensure your academic work follows standard conventions. The exact abbreviations depend on the referencing style, but these are commonly used in **Harvard referencing** and academic writing.

Abbreviation	Meaning	Example
ed.	Edition (singular) or editor (depending on context)	2nd **ed.**
eds.	Editors (plural)	Smith, J. and Brown, P. (**eds.**)
et al.	*Et alia* ("and others")	(Smith **et al.**, 2023)
p.	Page (single page)	(Jones, 2022, **p.** 45)
pp.	Pages (multiple pages)	**pp.** 45–58
vol.	Volume	**vol.** 5

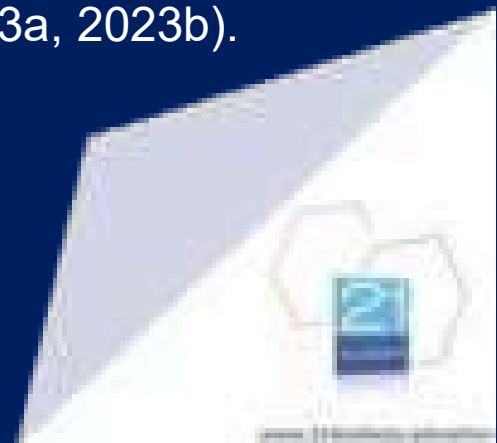
Abbreviation	Meaning	Example
no.	Number (issue number)	**no.** 2
n.d.	No date (when the publication date is unavailable)	Smith (**n.d.**)
n.p.	No place of publication (rarely used today)	n.p.
n.pub.	No publisher (if the publisher is unknown)	n.pub.
Accessed:	Date you accessed an online source:	Accessed: 17 July 2026

Reference list according to Harvard conventions

Compiling and organising a **reference list according to Harvard conventions** means creating a complete list of all the sources you cited in your assignment and presenting them in a consistent format.

Harvard Reference List Guidelines

- Include **only the sources cited in your assignment**.
- Place the reference list **at the end** of the document under the heading **References**.
- Arrange entries **alphabetically** by the **author's surname**.
- If there is **no author**, alphabetise by the **organisation's name** or the **title**.
- If you have **more than one work by the same author**, list them in **chronological order** (oldest to newest).
- If an author has **multiple works from the same year**, distinguish them with letters (e.g., 2023a, 2023b).
- Use **consistent formatting** throughout.
- **Italicise** book titles and journal titles.
- Use a **hanging indent** if required by your institution.



Secondary Sources and their use

A **secondary source** is used when the **original (primary) source is unavailable**, and you rely on another author's discussion or quotation of it.

For example:

You want to refer to a statement made by **Smith (1998)**.

You did **not** read Smith's original work.

You found the statement quoted in **Jones (2023)**.

❖ In this case, **Jones (2023)** is your source, and **Smith (1998)** is the secondary source.

How to cite a secondary source in Harvard style

In-text citation

Include the original author, followed by **cited in** and the author you actually read.

Example:

Smith (1998, cited in Jones, 2023) argues that effective leadership depends on communication.

Or in parentheses:

(Smith, 1998, cited in Jones, 2023)

Reference list

Only include the **source you actually read** in your reference list.

Example:

Jones, A. (2023) *Leadership in Modern Organisations*. 2nd edn. London: Pearson.

Do **not** include Smith (1998) in the reference list because you did not consult the original publication.

Harvard referencing formats for common source types -

Source Type	Reference List Format	Example
Book	Author(s) Surname, Initial(s). (Year) *Title of book*. Edition (if not first). Place of publication: Publisher.	Brown, T. (2021) *Business Management*. 3rd edn. London: Pearson.
Journal Article	Author(s) Surname, Initial(s). (Year) 'Title of article', *Journal Title*, Volume(Issue), pp. xx–xx. DOI (if available).	Patel, R. and Jones, L. (2023) 'The impact of remote working on productivity', *Journal of Business Research*, 45(2), pp. 120–135. https://doi.org/10.xxxx/xxxxx
Website	Author/Organisation. (Year) *Title of webpage*. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).	World Health Organization. (2024) *Mental health*. Available at: https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health (Accessed: 18 July 2026).
Report	Author/Organisation. (Year) *Title of report*. Place of publication: Publisher (if applicable).	Department for Education. (2023) *Education Statistics Annual Report*. London: Department for Education.

Harvard referencing formats for common source types -

Source Type	Reference List Format	Example
Chapter in an Edited Book	Chapter Author(s). (Year) 'Chapter title', in Editor(s) (ed./eds.) *Book title*. Place: Publisher, pp. xx–xx.	Green, P. (2022) 'Leadership styles', in White, J. (ed.) *Modern Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 55–72.
Newspaper Article	Author(s). (Year) 'Title of article', *Newspaper Name*, Day Month, p./pp. xx.	Smith, A. (2024) 'New policies announced for schools', *The Guardian*, 10 May, p. 8.
Conference Paper	Author(s). (Year) 'Title of paper', *Conference Name*, Location, Day–Day Month. Place: Publisher, pp. xx–xx.	Ahmed, S. (2023) 'Artificial intelligence in healthcare', *International Conference on Health Technology*, Manchester, 12–14 June. New York: IEEE, pp. 45–52.
Thesis/Dissertation	Author. (Year) *Title of thesis*. Degree. Institution.	Lee, K. (2021) *Sustainable Supply Chain Management*. PhD thesis. University of Leeds.

Harvard referencing formats for common source types -

Source Type	Reference List Format	Example
Government Publication	Government Department. (Year) *Title*. Place: Publisher	HM Government. (2023) *Net Zero Strategy*. London: HMSO.
Online Video (e.g. YouTube)	Author/Organisation. (Year) *Title of video*. Available at: URL (Accessed: Day Month Year).	TED. (2023) *The future of AI*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/ (Accessed: 17 July 2026).

Consequences of Poor Referencing

Poor referencing can have serious academic and professional consequences. These include:

- Plagiarism
- Academic penalties
- Loss of credibility
- Difficulty verifying information
- Copyright and ethical issues
- Weak academic writing
- Damage to professional reputation

Good referencing demonstrates **academic integrity**, gives credit to original authors, strengthens your arguments, and enables readers to verify and build on your research.

Common Referencing Errors

- Missing in-text citations.
- Mismatch between in-text citations and the reference list.
- Incorrect author name or author order.
- Wrong or missing publication year.
- Incomplete reference details (e.g., title, publisher, DOI, or URL).
- Incorrect formatting of book and journal titles (e.g., italics).
- Missing page numbers for direct quotations.
- Failure to use quotation marks for direct quotes.
- Mixing Harvard referencing with other citation styles.
- Reference list not arranged alphabetically by author's surname.
- Missing or incorrect URLs, DOIs, or access dates for online sources.
- Citing secondary sources instead of the original source when possible.
- Poor paraphrasing that can lead to plagiarism.
- Inconsistent formatting throughout the reference list.

Integrating Quotations into Writing

- Introduce quotations with a signal phrase (e.g., *According to Smith (2022),*).
- Use quotations only when the exact wording is important.
- Blend quotations smoothly into your own sentences.
- Keep quotations relevant to the point being discussed.
- Use quotation marks for short direct quotations.
- Include the author's name, publication year, and page number (if required) in the citation.
- Explain or analyse the quotation after including it.
- Avoid overusing quotations; balance them with paraphrasing and your own analysis.
- Ensure the quotation fits grammatically within the sentence.
- Do not alter the meaning of the original quotation; use ellipses (...) or square brackets [ ] only when appropriate.

How to avoid Patchwriting

Patchwriting is the practice of rewriting someone else's text by making only small changes, such as replacing a few words with synonyms, changing the word order, or slightly altering sentence structure, while keeping most of the original wording and ideas. It is considered a form of poor paraphrasing and may be treated as plagiarism if the source is not properly acknowledged.

For Example –

Original text:

"Regular physical activity improves both physical health and mental well-being."

Patchwriting (incorrect):

"Frequent physical exercise enhances both physical health and mental wellness."

This changes only a few words but closely follows the original sentence.

Correct paraphrase:

Engaging in exercise on a regular basis can improve overall fitness while also supporting emotional and psychological health (Author, Year).

How to avoid Patchwriting

- Read the original source carefully until you understand the main idea.
- Put the source aside before writing in your own words.
- Rewrite the information using your own sentence structure and vocabulary.
- Focus on explaining the idea rather than replacing a few words with synonyms.
- Compare your version with the original to ensure it is genuinely different.
- Always provide an in-text citation when using someone else's ideas, even if you paraphrase.
- Use direct quotations only when the exact wording is important, and cite them correctly.
- Combine information from multiple sources instead of relying on a single source.
- Add your own analysis, interpretation, or discussion to demonstrate original thinking.
- Review your work with a plagiarism checker or proofreading tool before submission, if available.

Difference between Bibliography and Reference List

Reference List	Bibliography
Includes only the sources cited in the text.	Includes all sources consulted, whether cited or not.
Appears at the end of the document.	Also appears at the end of the document.
Every in-text citation must have a matching entry in the reference list.	May contain additional reading and background sources not cited in the text.
Required in most Harvard referencing styles.	Used only if required by the institution or assignment guidelines.
Helps readers locate the exact sources used in the work.	Shows the full range of research undertaken by the writer.

- **Reference List:** Contains **only the sources you have cited** in your assignment.
- **Bibliography:** Contains **all sources you used or consulted**, including those **not directly cited** in the assignment.

Critical Analysis in Harvard Style of Academic Writing

It means going beyond simply describing or summarising information. It involves evaluating evidence, comparing viewpoints, questioning assumptions, and developing your own reasoned argument.

Description = *What happened?* or *What does the source say?*

Critical analysis = *Why does it matter? How convincing is it? What are its strengths and weaknesses? How does it compare with other evidence?*

❖ A strong critical analysis usually does the following:

- Explains the main ideas from different sources.
- Compares and contrasts authors' opinions.
- Evaluates the quality and reliability of the evidence.
- Identifies strengths, weaknesses, limitations, or biases.
- Draws logical conclusions based on evidence.
- Supports your own argument with references.

Critical Analysis in Harvard Style of Academic Writing

For Example

Descriptive writing:

Smith (2022) states that remote working increases employee productivity by reducing commuting time.

Critical analysis:

Smith (2022) argues that remote working improves productivity by reducing commuting time. However, this conclusion is based on data from technology companies, limiting its applicability to industries requiring on-site work. In contrast, Jones (2023) found that while productivity increased, collaboration and innovation declined in hybrid teams. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of remote working depends on the nature of the work rather than remote work itself.

Notice that the second example:

compares two sources, evaluates the evidence, identifies a limitation, reaches a reasoned conclusion.

Critical Analysis in Harvard Style of Academic Writing

Common phrases used in critical analysis

You can use language such as:

This suggests that...

However, this argument is limited because...

In contrast...

The evidence is convincing because...

A weakness of this study is...

This finding supports/challenges...

Although..., it fails to consider...

Critical Analysis in Harvard Style of Academic Writing

Tips for Harvard assignments

When writing critically:

- Do not rely on a single source.
- Support every claim with evidence and Harvard citations.
- Explain **why** the evidence is important instead of just reporting it.
- Present a balanced discussion before reaching your conclusion.
- Make your own argument clear throughout the assignment.

A useful rule is the **"What? So what? Now what?"** approach:

What? – What does the evidence or author say?

So what? – Why is it significant? Is it reliable? How does it compare with other evidence?

Now what? – What conclusion can you draw based on the evidence?

THANK YOU