

Are you reporting the information contained in your writer's text?

(Verbs such as *'state'*, *'discuss'*, *'argue'* and *'claim'*.)

The **SIMPLE PRESENT** is often used.

Example:
Mithen (1999) **argues** that the human mind is not as simple as a computer.

however...

The **SIMPLE PAST** is also used. It suggests that the information you are reporting is far away in time, or no longer true, or that it contrasts with your own findings or ideas.

Example:
Skinner (1957) **argued** that behavioural response can be explained by reinforcement.

The **PRESENT PERFECT** may also be used. It is often used when you are commenting on the views of a number of writers or studies.

Example:
Many authors (eg Kluge and Farris 1969, Lundberg 1972, Ross 1974) **have discussed** out-group comparisons.

Are you reporting actions by your writer which are now completed?

(Verbs such as *'study'*, *'analyse'* and *'investigate'*.)

Are you reporting one particular study?

The **SIMPLE PAST** is often used.
Example:
Wermers (2003) **found** that high-turnover funds provide higher returns.

Are you reporting a number of studies?

The **PRESENT PERFECT** is often used.
Example:
Many early childhood researchers **have investigated** issues related to multicultural education.

Are there rules about choosing the right tense for reporting verbs?

This helpsheet gives guidelines (not rules) about the use of tense with reporting verbs. The choice of reporting verbs and the sentence and paragraph structures used with them involves thinking carefully about the purpose of your writing, and of the main point you wish to highlight in a particular sentence or paragraph.

What is the best way to learn how to use reporting verbs correctly?

Becoming more aware of the different ways you can use reporting verbs will make your writing more sophisticated and more focused. The best way is to take note of reporting structures typically used by good writers in your field.

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