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School of Business
Work-Based Learning

Handbook

Reference guidance

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Contents

1. Introduction 3
2. Citing Authors in Assignment Text 5
3. Different ways you use referencing in your work. 9
4. Reference List and Bibliography 12
    4.1 Referencing Books 13
    4.2 Referencing Electronic Books 15
    4.3 Referencing Journal Articles 16
    4.4 Referencing Electronic Journals 18
    4.5 Referencing Websites 19
    4.6 Publications by governments and other organisations 21
    4.7 Referencing Newspapers 22
    4.8 Referencing Television / Radio Programmes 23
    4.9 Referencing Film / Video or DVD 24
    4.10 Conference Papers and Presentations 25
    4.11 E-mail 25
5. Reference List 26

1. Introduction

In the School of Business you will need to reference the information you use when writing your assignments. The School uses the Harvard System.

This guidance has been prepared to ensure you use the Harvard system correctly and use the format the School of Business suggests as appropriate.

This guidance will provide you with:-

- Examples of how to reference in your text (essay or assignment)
- Examples of how to place direct quotes in your work
- Examples of how to paraphrase
- How to produce a reference list at the end of your work
- Advice on how to set out your reference list
- An example reference list

This guidance is very important and is the tool you use when writing any piece of course work in order to ensure you are referencing correctly. Referencing requires practice so all your course work should be written with this guidance document to hand.

Referencing (or citing) means you have acknowledged you have taken ideas or words from an article or book you have read, a CD you have listened to, a DVD you have watched or any other source including the internet and place it into your assignment. It is essential that any information you have used is referenced correctly. Failure to reference means your work could be considered to be **plagiarised** which is the equivalent of **cheating** and is a very serious offence which is not acceptable in the University.

Referencing provides the evidence that you have undertaken your own research enabling you to find the information necessary for in-depth learning. It allows you to gain a broad perspective on different issues and to consider different aspects and points of view in the subjects you study. **This cannot be achieved by simply using class notes and hand out information to complete your assignments.**

The whole process of referencing involves you maintaining a detailed account of every piece of information you use. It is very frustrating to find a useful article or document and then be unable to locate it again if needed because you have not kept an accurate record of its source. Should this become inaccessible, you will have no record of the information and will no longer be able to use it in your essay. **Record keeping is essential (see section on How to find the information you need to compile a reference in Section 4).**

There are examples later in this guide of what information you should record for each type of resource you use.

2. Citing Authors in Assignment Text

Citing one author

<u>Citing authors directly in your text</u>

You may want to refer to an author directly by stating that they said or indicated something specific.

For example:

Jones (2008) suggests that outdoor play provides children with important social skills.

Outdoor play provides several important social skills. This view is supported by Jones (2008).

Note here the date is in brackets after the author name.

<u>Citing authors indirectly in the text</u>

This is when you make a statement and then cite a reference as evidence.

For example:

Outdoor play provides children with several important social skills (Jones, 2008).

Here the author and date are all in brackets after the statement being made.

Citing two authors

<u>Citing more than one author directly in the text</u>

For example:

Jones (2008) and Evans (2009) suggest outdoor play provides…..

This view is supported by Jones (2008) and Evans (2009)…

<u>Citing more than one author indirectly in the text</u>

For example:

Several authors suggest that outdoor play supports social development (Thomas, 2005; Jones, 2008; Evans, 2009).

Remember if you indicated something is a widely held view or that several authors have suggested a point of view then you must cite several authors where you have read this information.

Two authors for the same work

When there are two authors for a work they should both be noted in the text:

For example:

Citing authors directly in the text

Davies and Evans (2008) in their recent research paper found that……..

Research by Davies and Evans (2008) suggests that …….

Citing authors indirectly in the text

Recent research demonstrates that outdoor play benefits a child's social skills (Davies and Evans, 2008).

Citing more than two authors

More than two authors for the same work

Where there are several authors' names on a source (more than two), only the first author needs to be referenced in the text followed by '**et al.**' meaning 'and others':

For example:

Citing authors directly in the text

Evans et al. (1995) found that the ……

Citing authors indirectly in the text

Recent research has found that …… (Evans et al., 1995)

No date?

Rarely there may be a piece of information which does not have a date

In such cases you indicate this by replacing the date with date unknown.

Citing authors directly in the text

Thomas (date unknown) has demonstrated……

Citing authors indirectly in the text

Innovative research (Smith, date unknown) demonstrated that…..

Every effort should be made to find the year of publication when using the information in an assignment.

Page Numbers

Using Page Numbers

The general rule here is:

- you must always use page numbers when referring to direct quotes (see section 3).
- if you paraphrase a specific idea or issue which is found on a page or section of a book or article then this can also be given a page number(s).

Page numbers are not always necessary when you paraphrase broad ideas especially when these ideas are at the heart of an author's theory or work or are overriding points which an author repeats throughout their book or article.

The format is as follows when citing page numbers. Section 3 will provide further examples of using page numbers.

Citing authors directly in the text

Lawrence (1966:125) stated that…..

Citing authors indirectly in the text

Outdoor play provides a stimulating experience (Lawrence, 1966:125).

125 refers to the page number.

Citing several works by one author

Several works by one author in different years

If more than one publication from an author illustrates the same point and the works are published in different years, then the references should be cited in chronological order (the earliest first).

For example:

Citing authors directly in the text

As suggested by Jones (2008, 2009) outdoor play supports a child's social development.

Citing authors indirectly in the text

Outdoor play can support a child's social development (Jones 1992, 1994).

Sometimes the same author or group of authors have published more than one article in the same year.

When citing several pieces of work published by the same author in the same year they need to be differentiated by including a lower case letter after the year for each publication.

For example:

Although research by Jones (2008a) found that outdoor play was included in the curriculum recent research has indicated that practitioners did not have the skills to provide a far reaching provision (Jones, 2008b).

When several works are published in the same year and are referred to on one occasion or the same author or group of authors have made the same key points in several publications they can all be cited by including a lower case letter after the year of publication.

For example:

Jones (2008a, b, c) has stated on several occasions that outdoor play benefits children's learning.

3. Different ways you use referencing in your work.

Quotations

Direct Quotes

Sometimes a piece of information is so clear and useful in the context of your assignment that you wish to quote it directly. For example something you have read which you wish to place **word for word** in your essay. This is a direct quote and you must demonstrate that it is a direct quote in your essay. Direct quotes should be used sparingly and for emphasis. An essay which is one long quote after another is a weak essay and it does not allow you to demonstrate analysis and evaluation skills. It suggests you are unable to make sense of the work yourself. Use quotes with meaning and that support the arguments and issues you are trying to make in your essay. They are evidence for the ideas you have discussed in your assignments. **As a general rule you should not have more than two quotes on any page of an assignment.**

When referencing quotes in the text of an assignment.

All quotes need the:-

- author surname
- date of publication
- page the quote was found in the book or other source
- quote itself in quotation marks

Short quotes (up to approximately 30 words)

For example:

Jones (2008: 57) suggests that a 'child responds positively to outdoor experience' and therefore should be encouraged to engage in outdoor activity.

It is important to challenge learners in order to retain their enthusiasm. One way of doing this is to set students a range of interesting problems to solve because 'thinking can be very exciting and highly motivating for students' (Cowley, 2004: xiii)

Long Quotes (more than approximately 30 words)

Outdoor experiences provide young children with opportunities to improve their physical, social and cognitive skills. As Jones (2008) states:

> The outdoors provides an unrivalled activity centre, where children can run, jump, climb, learn to play with friends and carers and learn about nature. They can feel the different elements, engage all their senses and most importantly have fun and exercise.
>
> (Jones, 2008: 25).

Note the quote is placed away from the main essay text and is indented on each side. The long quote, unlike most of your essay, should be single spaced. Long quotes do not therefore need to use quotation marks.

Quotes should be meaningful and add to the points being made. Do not use quotes just for the sake of reaching your word limit or because you think you have to.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing

This is what you often do in essays and other assignment work when you take the ideas and principles you have read and listened to and put them **into your own words**. It is a widely held misconception that only direct quotes need to be referenced. **This is not the case.** Any ideas, theories, opinions or any other information taken from elsewhere must be referenced correctly. The art of writing a good essay is to be able to use your own academic style to weave together other authors' ideas and research results. However you must cite all the authors that have provided you with this knowledge as you did not come up with the theories or research cited. In fact you must use other people's research as a means to underpin the issues you discuss in an essay or other assignments.

For example you may read and be very familiar with Piaget and Vygotsky but you must always cite correctly where you read about their ideas. This is the nature of academic work where academics are courteous to each other and should never present someone else's ideas as their own.

An example of a section of text which is paraphrasing:-

Jones (2008) highlights the importance of outdoor play and suggests that children require opportunities to engage with nature as a means to improve their emotional and physical development. Other studies also highlight the importance of outdoor activities including Forest School initiatives (Evans, 2007; Thomas, 2009), outdoor learning experiences

(WAG, 2008a, b, c) and environmental education programmes (Fien and Tilbury, 1997; Kaplan and Kaplan, 2002)…… Statistics cited in research undertaken on behalf of the Forestry Commission (Morgan, 2007) suggest that 30% of young children are not engaging with the natural environment more than once a week.

4. Reference List and Bibliography

In text citations, discussed thus far are of no value without a reference list or bibliography at the end of your assignment, providing a full set of details about each source you have cited in your assignment.

A Reference List is a list of the information you have used in your essay and every author cited must correspond exactly to the list of sources in your list at the end of your assignment.

A Bibliography is a list of every piece of information you have used even if does not appear in your assignment text.

The School of Business uses the Reference List method and this is what you should follow in all your assignments.

Compiling a Reference List

How to find the information you need to compile a Reference List

The information required will appear on the book, article, video, newspaper, DVD, or other source you use. You must be a detective and ensure you find all the information required to produce a proper Reference List. Therefore while writing your assignments it is a good idea to:-

- **keep a note book, index cards or electronic document where each time you use any information you note down the reference details in full. If you do this you will not be able to lose important material and can find it easily again if you need to;**
- **type your reference list for each assignment as you go along. Do not leave the typing of the reference list until the last minute as this is when silly typing errors and omissions creep into the work.**

The next section will explain how to set out a Reference List correctly and the format required. **The use of punctuation and brackets when producing a reference list is**

very important. You may lose marks for sloppy presentation which does not follow this guidance accurately.

Whatever the source of material you use it is conventional for the author (be it a person(s) or organisation) and date to be placed in the text and for the full reference to be placed in the Reference List.

4.1 Referencing Books

Referencing Books

Format to follow:-

Comma after surname

Full stop after initial

Date in brackets

Title of book in italics

Place of publication (followed by colon)

Publisher company (in full) (followed by full stop)

For example:

1 author

Hurst, V. (1999) *Planning for Early Learning*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

2 authors

Greig, A. and Taylor, J. (1999) *Doing Research with Children.* London: Sage Publications.

Mitchell, P. and Ziegler, F. (2007) *Fundamentals of Development: the Psychology of Childhood.* Nottingham: Nottingham University Press.

3 authors

Sylva, K., Roy, C. and Painter, M. (1986) *Childwatching at Playgroup and Nursery School.* Oxford: Blackwell.

As you add more authors the author before last has 'and' placed after the initial rather than a comma.

In text

Sylva et al. (1986) highlights the importance of observing children and how these opportunities can allow child care practitioners to improve the learning experiences of young children. Grieg and Taylor (1999) support such views and provide a strong ethical framework in which to undertake such observational studies.

In Reference List

Greig, A. and Taylor, J. (1999) *Doing Research with Children.* London: Sage Publications.
Hurst, V. (1999) Plan*ning for Early Learning*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
Mitchell, P. and Ziegler, F. (2007) *Fundamentals of Development: the Psychology of Childhood.* Nottingham: Nottingham University Press.
Sylva, K., Roy, C. and Painter, M. (1986) *Childwatching at Playgroup and Nursery School.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Referencing Books with Editors

Books may sometimes be edited, which means that different authors have written different chapters in the book.
If a book has editor(s) you add (ed) or (eds) after the name.

For example:

Garvey, B., Clutterbuck, D. and Lane (eds.) (2004:173) *When mentoring goes wrong…The Situational Mentor An International Review of Competencies and Capabilities in Mentoring.* Hants: Gower

When using an edited book if you have only used specific chapters these are what are referenced in your Reference List.

For example:

Eby, L.T. (2007) Understanding Relational Problems in Mentoring, in (eds.) Ragins, B.R. and Kram, K.E *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work Theory, Research and Practice* UK: Sage, 323-344

Note that, in this instance, you give the page numbers of the chapter written by Eby.

In your essay text you would either cite directly Eby (2007) or indirectly (Eby, 2007).

Referencing Books with Different Editions

Popular books or books that are very useful are often republished and it is important you note which edition you have read:-

For example:

When referencing a 2nd edition book.

Sharman, C., Cross, W. and Vennis, D. (2000) *Observing Children: a Practical Guide.* (2nd ed) London: Continuum.

If it is a first edition book you do not add any information on the edition of the book.

Secondary citation

Several text books use examples from other sources. For example if you have read about Vygotsky it is likely that you have read accounts of his work from text books or articles rather than from his original writing.

You should make this clear in your text:-

For example:

Citing directly

Vygotsky (1978 cited in Daniels, 2005:56) discussed the Zone of Proximal Development.

or

Citing Indirectly

Discussion of learning and development is highlighted in the Zone of Proximal Development theory (Vygotsky 1978 cited in Daniels, 2005:56).

You then only cite the book you actually read in the Reference List:-

Daniels, H. ed. (2005) *An Introduction to Vygotsky.* London: Routledge.

4.2 Referencing Electronic Books

Electronic Books (E-books)

The format for referencing electronic books is similar to that of conventional books.

The author, date and page number (if appropriate) are placed in text in the same way as a conventional book.

For example:
(Dean, 2008:56)

The Reference List citing for an electronic book follows the same format as any book but you record the date you accessed the book and the relevant URL website address details, as well as indicating the book is an e-book.

For example:
Dean, J. (2002) *Managing the Primary School: Educational Management Series*. London: Routledge. [e-book]. Available at http://www.netLibrary.com/Reader [Accessed: 7th April 2004].

Marshall, G. (1990) *In Praise of Sociology.* London: Unwin Hyman. [e-book]. Available at: http://www.swan.ac.uk/lis/information_gateway/ebooks/marshall/ [Accessed: 24th March 2004].

4.3 Referencing Journal Articles

Journals

Journals are publications that are published every week, month, quarter etc. They are academic and peer reviewed meaning that the work published in a journal has been judged and scrutinised by experts before being allowed to be included in the publication. These journals are sometimes referred to as periodicals.

Each journal usually has at least 6 different articles within it every time it is published. For example the *Early Years* journal may have 10 articles ranging from articles about language development to articles about special educational needs. Every article will be published by different researchers and experts in early years from around the UK and often the world.

As a result you will often only use some of the articles you read in a particular journal rather than the whole journal. For example if you are interested in bilingualism in young children then you would read articles from different journals which research this area.

You must therefore indicate in your Reference List what precise article (sometimes referred to as a paper) you have read out of all the possible articles that can be found in the different editions of a journal.

Format to follow (print journals):

Author(s)
Comma after surname
Full stop after initial
Year in brackets
Name of article in single quotation marks (followed by a comma)
Name of journal in italics (followed by comma)
Volume number if given
Issue Number if given in brackets
Month or time of year if given (followed by comma)
Pages (followed by full stop)

The pages are noted by pp. and you indicate the first and last page of the article you used.

For example:

Chalmers, J. and Chaudhuri, U. (2004) 'Sniff Art', *The Drama Review: The Journal of Performance Studies*, Summer, pp.76-80.

Fuller, M., Bradley, A., Healey, M. (2004) 'Incorporating disabled students within an inclusive higher education environment', *Disability and Society: The Leading Journal in Disability Studies*, 19(5) August. pp.455-468.

Somekh, B. and Davies, R. (1991)'Towards a pedagogy for information technology', *The Curriculum Journal*, 2(2) pp.153-70.

The information you require will usually be found on the front page of the specific article you are using or in the header or footer of the article.

As in all Harvard system citations the author date and page (s) as necessary would go in your assignment text.

For example, in text :

Direct

Chalmers and Chaduduri (2004)

Indirect

(Chalmers and Chaduduri, 2004)

4.4 Referencing Electronic Journals

E-Journals

E-journals are referenced in the same way as conventional paper based journals but you add to the end of article details:-

[Online]

Web address

Accessed Date

Sometimes in this type of article there will be no pages as they may not appear on the screen. If pages are indicated you must add them to your Reference List.

For example:

Jenkings, R. (1989) Clashing with caching. *Ariadne,* 21,10th September. [Online]. Available at: http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue21/web-cache/ [Accessed: 2nd December 2004].

Powers, D. E. and Kaufman, J.C. (2003)'Do standardized tests penalize deep-thinking, creative, or conscientious students? Some personality correlates of Graduate Record Examinations test scores' *Intelligence*, 32, pp.145-153. [Online]. Available at: http://www.sciencedirect.com/ [Accessed: 24th May 2007].

Conventionally you will use information from books, journal articles, e-books and e-journals. However there are other sources you may sometimes use. The next section provides some useful examples.

4.5 Referencing Websites

Websites

You should be cautious when using websites. Only use websites that your lecturers have advised you to use, or those that are likely to be reputable such as:-

.ac.uk

.gov.uk

You should **never use** the Wikipedia site in your assignments as its content is not always accurate. If in doubt ask your lecturer or consult the Learning Resource Centre to arrange an Information Skills consultation.

Referencing websites

Format to follow:

Author or organisation name

Date in brackets

Title of article (in single quotation marks)

Name of internet site

Web address in full

Accessed on date [in Square brackets]

Example 1

If you wanted to reference the following site:

http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/piaget.html

which included an article written by C.G. Boeree

In your essay text it would be:

Piaget studied genetic epistemology, which is the study of the development of knowledge (Boeree, 2006).

In your Reference List it would be:

Boeree, C.G. (2006) '*Personality Theories*. Jean Piaget 1896-1980'. http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/piaget.html [Accessed: 18th November 2008].

Example 2

When you cannot find an author use the organisation name.

If you wanted to reference the following BBC site:-
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7734576.stm

In your essay text it would be:
Since the Baby P case there has been a need to change child protection policy (BBC, 2008).

In your Reference List it would be:
BBC (2008)'*Child Protection Plans Revealed'*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7734576.stm [Accessed: 18th November 2008].

Example 3
If you wanted to reference the following NHS site:-
http://www.nhs.uk/news/2008/11November/Pages/Tomatoesandfertility.aspx
In your essay text it would be:

Tomatoes have been linked to increases in fertility (NHS, 2008).

In your Reference List it would be:
NHS (2008)'*Tomatoes and Fertility'*.
http://www.nhs.uk/news/2008/11November/Pages/Tomatoesandfertility.aspx [Accessed: 18th November 2008].

Where you have a month and year for the article on a web site you should use both.

Example 4
If you do not have an author or organisation you can find for a web site then:-
In your essay:-
Research suggests play is important for child development (Unknown author, 2008).
In Reference List:
Unknown author (2008) *'Play and Children'*. http://www.goearlyyears.pdf.76789 [Accessed: 18th November 2008].

Example 5

If you cannot find a date for a web site article:-

In essay text:

Outdoor learning provides children with several important gross motor skills (Jones, unknown date).

In Reference List:

Jones, E. unknown date. *'Outdoor learning'* http://www.goearlyyears.pdf.76789 [Accessed: 18th November 2008].

If you cannot find author, organisation or date, you should avoid the web site.

4.6 Publications by governments and other organisations

Some reports are written by an organisation or government department.

For example the Foundation Phase document can be referenced as follows:-

Wales: Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. (2008) *Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales.* Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government.

In the assignment text you would cite the author and date in this case

(Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2008) or (DCELLS, 2008).

If you have accessed the report on line then you add the relevant web details.

For example:

Wales: Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. (2008) *Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales.* Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government. Available at: http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/curriculum_and_assessment/arevisedcurriculumforwales/foundationphase/foundtation2008-e.pdf?lang=en [Accessed: 4th June 2005].

Government papers

For example:

In Reference List:

White paper:

Great Britain: Department of Health Choice and Opportunity: primary care: the future. Cm.3390. London, Stationery Office, 1996.

Green paper:

Great Britain: Department of Health Our Healthier Nation: a contract for health. Cm 3854. London, Stationery Office, 1998.

Act of Parliament:

Great Britain: National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Chapter 19. London, HMSO, 1990.

In text:

(Great Britain National Health Service and Community Care Act, 1990).

4.7 Referencing Newspapers

Newspapers

Format to follow:

Author (s)

Year in brackets

Title of Article (in single quotation marks)

Title of Newspaper (in italics) followed by edition if required (in rounded brackets)

Day and Month (followed by colon)

Page (s) (followed by comma)

For example:

Gibson, O. and Plunkett, J. (2004) 'Public doubt over licence fee for declining BBC', *The Guardian.* 21 July: pp.2.

If the newspaper article is online then you add the relevant web details.

For example:

Gibson, O and Plunkett, J. (2004)'Public doubt over licence fee for declining BBC', *The Guardian.* 21 July: pp.2. [Online]. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/456789 [Accessed: 24th May 2007].

4.8 Referencing Television / Radio Programmes

<u>Television / Radio Programme</u>

Format to follow:-

Title of Programme (in italics followed by full stop)

Year in brackets

Episode Number (if available) (followed by full stop)

Title of Episode (in quotation marks)

Channel (followed by full stop)

Full Date (followed by full stop)

Time of Transmission (followed by full stop)

In text:

In this case in your assignment text you would not cite an author but instead a programme name.

Horizon (2004)

(Horizon, 2004)

In Reference List :-

Horizon. (2004) Episode 25.'Climate Change' BBC2. 30 August 2004. 2100 hrs

<u>Television / Radio Interview</u>

In text:

Jones (2006) stated that "outdoor play benefits children by allowing them to explore their creativity in a stimulating and diverse arena"

These quotes are given double quotation marks because you are referring to speech spoken in the programme rather than written quotes.

Example in Reference List

Jones, R. (2006) 'Interview' In: *Playtime*. BBC4. 22 July 2006. 1800 hrs.

4.9 Referencing Film / Video or DVD

Film / Video / DVD

Format to follow:

Title (in italics followed by full stop)

Date of Release

in brackets

Director's name (if appropriate) (followed by full stop)

Place (followed by full stop).

Production Company (followed by comma)

Medium Format [in square brackets] followed by full stop

In Reference List/Bibliography:

Film

Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? (1962) Directed by Robert Aldrich. USA: Warner Bros. [Film: 35mm].

Video

Reading with Colour: A Film about MearesIrlenSyndrome. (2000) Essex: Sylva Productions in collaboration with University of Essex Visual Perception Unit. [Video: VHS].

Health for All Children 3: the video. (2004) London: Child Growth Foundation. [Video: VHS].

DVD

Blade Runner: the Director's Cut. (1992) Directed by Ridley Scott. USA: Warner Bros, 1992. [DVD].

In the text you cite the name of the film or DVD / video with the date rather than an author. For example:

In text:

(Reading with Colour: A Film About MearesIrlen Syndrome, 2000).

4.10 Conference Papers and Presentations

Format to follow:

Author

Year in brackets

Title of paper (in single quotation marks)

Title of conference (in italics followed by full stop)

Organisers of conference (followed by comma)

Place of conference (followed by full stop)

Date of conference (in brackets)

If the paper is available on line also include access details.

For example:

In Reference List

Jones, M. (2004) 'Sliding into the swamp? A Study of Newly Qualified Teachers Engaging in Critical Reflection upon Their Practice' *Hawaii International Conference on Education*. University of Hawaii, Honolulu, U.S.A. (3-6 January).

In Text:

Jones (2004) explored the experiences of new teachers.

This study explored new teachers experiences (Jones, 2004).

4.11 E-mail

E-mail

Format to follow:

Author of email (sender)

Subject (in italics followed by full stop)

email to recipient's name [in square brackets]

Date of email (in brackets followed by full stop)

Example in Reference List:

Steel, L. *Harvard Referencing.* email to Tinney, G. (3rd May 2010).

In Text:

(Steel, 2010)

You must gain **permission** from the other person/s involved before citing an e-mail.

5. Reference List

The References you use throughout your assignment text should be listed in alphabetical order according to author surname or organisation name.

You produce one list. **There is no need to differentiate between the different types of reference. Therefore books, journals articles, websites and any other sources are all in one list.**

An example mock piece of text with a reference list is attached in order for you to see what an academic piece of writing with correct referencing should look like. Note the Reference List should begin on a new page with a title. The spacing used to produce the list will be the same as that used in your essay (1.5 spacing). Each reference starts on a new line directly underneath the reference before.

Mock section from an essay

Several research studies have indicated that children gain many important skills and attributes (including confidence, self esteem, motor function, and higher level learning) when given the opportunity to play in the outdoor environment (Evans, 2007a; Jones, 2007; Singh, 2003). There is a consensus within recent research that outdoor experiences and play enable children to achieve their fullest potential (Harper, 2007; Marion, 2008; Murphy, 2008). This is highlighted particularly well by the work of Singh (2003).

> What better opportunity than playing in nature to allow children to exercise, take part in discovery learning, be creative, learn about their place in the world and engage with their natural landscape. There are many temptations such as television, video / DVD and computer games which serve to keep children indoors. However none of these activities can provide the social, environmental and cultural benefits of playing in the great outdoors, be that the back yard, park or nature reserve.
>
> (Singh, 2003:34)

There are many examples of childcare settings undertaking work which promotes outdoor play (Jones, 2007a; Singh, 2003; Tilbury, 2007). One such example is a child care setting in Llancradog, South Wales, a nursery school for two to five year old children. An observational based research study by Jones and Evans (2008) highlighted that the children provided with opportunities for outdoor play in the nursery setting had improved motor function skills, including hand to eye coordination. The same study also indicated that children had increased social skills including their willingness to engage in group activities (Jones and Evans, 2008). Children were observed 'playing and working on tasks together even though they had only met a few minutes earlier' (Jones and Evans, 2008: 126).

Research literature from Denmark suggests that there are several social and health benefits for children involved in sustained programmes of outdoor play (Johansen, 2005; Merrick et al., 2003; Thomas, 2005). The long standing outdoor learning and play activities in Denmark have been used as a model for good practice across Wales (Evans, 2007b). Initiatives such as the Forest School programme are based on several theories of experiential learning highlighted in Danish studies (Johansen, 2005; Merrick et al., 2003). The author's own experiences of a Forest School project have reinforced several of the findings in recent literature. A Forest School project designed for early years children (two-five years old) in Brechfa provided a stimulating environment where children were able to develop social and physical capabilities through play and experiential learning. Evidence of the skills developed were highlighted in Forest School Fun (2008).

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