Signal Phrases

It is important to cite another’s words or ideas to avoid plagiarism. When introducing a quote, paraphrase, or summary of another author’s work, it is common to write “According to so and so…” This is a signal phrase, a phrase that signals to the reader that either a direct quote or a paraphrase is about to follow. Since it becomes monotonous to always read “according to,” signal phrases should be varied. Below is a cornucopia of signal phrase verbs to consider.

acknowledges  adds  admits  agrees  argues  asserts
believes  claims  comments  compares  confirms  contends
declares  demonstrates  denies  describes  disputes  emphasizes
derenders  explains  grants  illustrates  indicates  implies
insisted  narrates  notes  observes  offers  outlines
points out  reasons  refutes  rejects  reports  responds
says  shows  suggested  thinks  writes

Signal verbs be varied, but so can the way the quote or phrase is incorporated into the sentence.

The following are examples of quotes or paraphrases in APA style:

- Charlie Beach, renowned butterfly expert, declared, “Gardens with milkweed and at least six colors of flowers will attract a plethora of species” (as cited in Martin, 2007, p. 6).
- Research points out colorful gardens attract butterflies (Martin, 2007, p. 5).
- Beach (2010) asserts that butterflies can see red, yellow, and green.
- As Bartell explains, “Butterflies cannot fly if their body temperature is less than 86 degrees” (2008, p. 3114).
- “Some moths never eat anything as adults because they don’t have mouths. They must live on the energy they stored as caterpillars,” according to the website Thebutterflysite.com (n.d.).
- Dylan contends in her 2009 article published in Moth News, that anyone can attract moths.
VERB TENSE WITH APA PAPERS

The following examples are provided to illustrate correct application of verb tense to various parts of the research report. The relevant verb form is underlined.

Sample 1. Use the past tense to express a past action:

“In 1999, the Research Inventory was published based on an earlier inventory developed by Smith (1999) entitled…”

Sample 2. Use the past tense when discussing another writer’s work:

“Jones (1999) measured the level of concern among graduate students and concluded that age is an important determinant of…”

Sample 3. Use the present perfect tense for past action that continues on:

“Initial and subsequent investigations have found no support for this assertion.”

Sample 4. Use the past tense to describe the Purpose of the Study:

“The purpose was to conduct a summative evaluation of…”

Sample 5. Use the present tense for the Statement of the Problem:

What is the relationship between occupational interests and career maturity?

Sample 6. Use the present tense to report data and to discuss the results:

“The mean rating for Item 18 is the highest for any statement contained within this subpart. Indeed, 41 (48%) of the total respondents indicate strongly agree for this statement.”

Sample 7. Use the present tense to report conclusions and to discuss implications.

“The major finding is that subjects have a moderate degree of concern for career development tasks associated with the Exploration Stage. The implication of this finding is that the Department may need to implement a counseling program…”

From: Southern Illinois University