

Using Evidence

Why is evidence necessary?

Evidence ensures that the writer's argument is well supported by experts in a field of study. It enhances what the writer has already explained.

What materials are used?

There is a wide variety of evidence that can be used but the type used is dictated by the subject matter.

Examples

- Social Sciences or Sciences require research work published in academic journals, reliable statistics found in government publications, relevant information in current textbooks.
- Business and IT require articles from professional business journals, e.g., Business Review Weekly and reliable statistics.
- Nursing requires professional journal articles on current research, relevant information in current textbooks, and policy documents.
- English literature requires evidence, in the first instance, from the literary texts being discussed in the essay, then from critical essays found in both academic journals and appropriate and reliable critiques in books.
- Education requires evidence from educational journal articles, government publications (i.e., syllabi, discussion papers, position papers, reports) and reliable statistics.
- Visual Arts requires reliable critiques of designated art works, which are usually found in books and journals.

How to use evidence

One can use direct quotes or choose to paraphrase or summarise the ideas expressed in a journal article or book.

The paraphrase or summary is the preferred method, although there are occasions when the writer feels the use of a direct quote has a special impact or purpose.

Is a name and date accompanied by a short sentence sufficient? Just name-dropping does not do justice to the writer's or researcher's work which you are incorporating in your assignment, nor does it sufficiently support your explanation and argument.

Example

Suppose a Human Development student was set an essay to account for the high rate of violence among children today.

Suppose the student chose the watching of violence on TV by children as one of the factors contributing towards violence among children today.

First of all, the student argues or explains the case.

Let us suppose that the paragraphs on the next page are in the body of the essay (not the introduction):

Sample

Sufficient evidence exists to support the idea that children's behaviour can be adversely affected by frequent viewing of violent TV programs (Clarke, 1995). The young viewers can have their sensitivities towards violence blunted and so begin to view aggressive behaviour as the norm and a way to solve their problems. Specifically, some children seek to emulate the violence they have viewed on TV. It has been pointed out, however, that not all young viewers will adopt and develop aggressive behaviour which emerges out of certain developmental factors working in conjunction with what is viewed on the screen (Lovelace, 1997). For example, children who are already aggressive, tend to prefer to watch programs which contain violence and so have this tendency reinforced; while children who have open communication with their parents have many opportunities to voice opinions and have their behaviour monitored.

The research of Bandura in the 1960s on how much the factor of imitation plays a role in influencing violent behaviour in children who watch violence on TV, *shows* some significant results (Bandura, as cited in Berkowitz, 1965). His findings *indicate* that children can be encouraged to behave more aggressively after they have been exposed to violence on film and TV. In addition, he *notes* that imitation of the violent behaviour of observed models is a way for children to become like their heroes.

Following Bandura's work, there has been a great deal of research and reporting on the effect on children who view violence on TV. One notable report, that of the National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH, USA], (1982), *sums* up ten years of scientific research on the implications of the effects on children who have a habit of viewing violence on TV. It *concludes* that TV plays a significant role in children's lives and has a general potential to influence aggressive behaviour, particularly if the tendency for violence is already present in the children's lives. Even the potential for aggressive behaviour in pre-school children as a result of their constant viewing of violence in their favourite TV shows is identified.

What happened in the previous piece of writing?

Firstly, in the body paragraph, there was a topic sentence that identified the main idea of the discussion. (See underlined opening sentence.)

Then, after the topic sentence in the first body paragraph, the writer explained and clarified what was contained in this sentence.

Lastly, in the second and third body paragraphs, the writer produced evidence to support the argument. The evidence was drawn from two journal articles, one on the research of Bandura and the other on an official report made by the National Institute of Mental Health (USA). Both articles reinforced the writer's argument.

Note

- Reporting verbs are used in the two paragraphs giving evidence. (See the *italicised* verbs in the sample paragraphs.)
- The findings of Bandura and the NIMH Report support the explanation.
- Unless you have been specifically asked to use earlier publications, usually you will use resources published within the last 5 years.

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