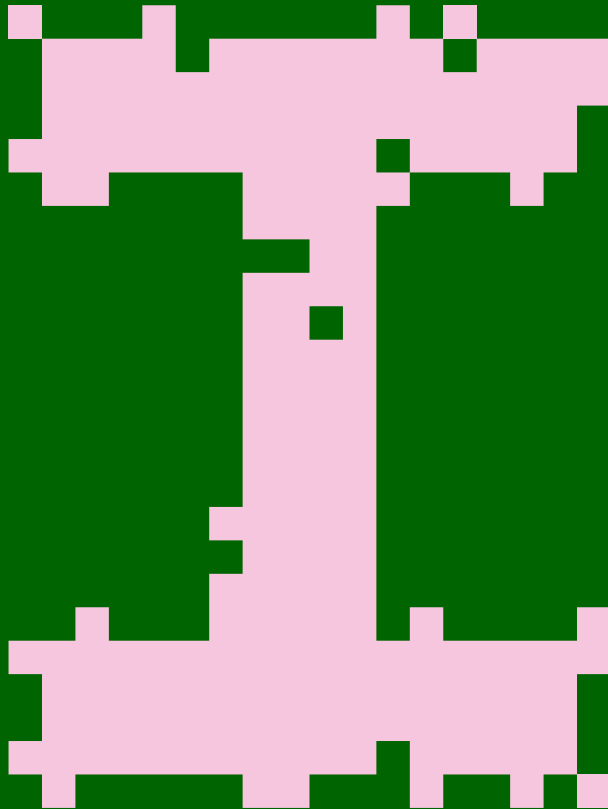


# IMPERIAL

Library Services

## Citing and Referencing Vancouver Style



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There are many styles that can be used for referencing. When you are given coursework or dissertation guidelines, check which style of referencing your lecturer or department asks you to use. If you don't check, and you use a style that is not the one stated in your guidelines, you could find you lose marks.

This guide introduces you to the Vancouver referencing style, which uses a 'numerical' approach.

When you begin your research for any piece of work, it is important that you record the details of all the information you find. You will need these details to provide accurate references, and to enable you to locate the information again at a later date, should it be necessary to do so. Section 6 of this guide will help you identify what information you need, regardless of which referencing style you choose to use.

## 1. What is referencing?

It is a method used to demonstrate to your readers that you have conducted a thorough and appropriate literature search and reading. Equally, referencing is an acknowledgement that you have used the ideas and written material belonging to other authors in your own work. As with all referencing styles, there are two parts: citing and the reference list.

## 2. Why should I reference?

Referencing is crucial to carrying out successful research and crucial to your readers so they can see how you did your research. Knowing why you **need** to reference means you will understand **how** to reference.

1. Accurate referencing is a key component of good academic practice and enhances the presentation of your work. It shows that your writing is based

**For more information, please see our online guide to Vancouver style:**

[www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/reference-management/vancouver-style](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/reference-management/vancouver-style)

on knowledge and informed by appropriate academic reading.

2. You will ensure that anyone reading your work can trace the sources you have used in the development of your work, and give you credit for your research efforts and quality.
3. If you do not acknowledge another person's work or ideas, you could be accused of plagiarism.

Your lecturers are very keen to see good reference lists. Impress them with the quality of the information you use and your references. You will get even better marks.

### **3. What should I reference?**

You should include a reference for all the sources of information that you use when writing or creating a piece of your own work.

### **4. What is a citation?**

When you use another person's work in your own work, either by referring to their ideas, or by including a direct quotation, you must acknowledge this in the text of your work. This acknowledgement is called a citation.

### **5. How do I write citations using the Vancouver style?**

Each piece of work which is cited in your text should have a unique number assigned in the order of citation. If you cite a piece of work more than once, the same citation number should be used. You can write the number in brackets or as superscript.

## 5.1 Citing one author

Recent research (1)

**or**

Recent research<sup>1</sup> indicates that the number of duplicate papers being published is increasing.

## 5.2 Citing more than one piece of work at the same time

If you want to cite several pieces of work in the same sentence, you will need to include the citation number for each piece of work. A hyphen should be used to link numbers which are inclusive, and a comma used where numbers are not consecutive.

The following is an example where works 6, 7, 8, 9, 13 and 15 have been cited in the same place in the text.

Several studies (6–9, 13, 15) have examined the effect of congestion charging in urban areas.

## 5.3 Citing the author's name in your text

You can use the author's name in your text, but you must insert the citation number as well.

As emphasised by Watkins (2) carers of diabetes sufferers 'require perseverance and an understanding of humanity' (p.1).

## 5.4 Citing more than one author's name in your text

If a work has more than one author and you want to cite author names in your text, use 'et al.' after the first author.

Simons et al. (3) state that the principle of effective stress is 'imperfectly known and understood by many practising engineers' (p.4).

## 5.5 Citing works by the same author written in the same year

If you cite a new work which has the same author and was written in the same year as an earlier citation, each work will have a different number.

Communication of science in the media has increasingly come under focus, particularly where reporting of facts and research is inaccurate (4,5)

## 5.6 Citing from works with no obvious author

If you need to cite a piece of work which does not have an obvious author, you should use what is called a 'corporate' author. For example, many online works will not have individually named authors and in many cases the author will be an organisation or company. Using the Vancouver style you don't have to include the author in your citation in the text of your work, but you still need to include an author in the full reference at the end of your work (see section 6).

The citation to a work written by a 'corporate' author could appear in your text as:

The Department of Health (6) advocates a national strategy for creating a framework to drive improvements in dementia services.

**or**

A national strategy is creating a framework to drive improvements in dementia services (6).

If you are unable to find either a named or corporate author, you should use 'Anon' as the author name.

## If there is no author

If you cannot find an author for online work, it is not a good idea to use this work as part of your research, unless it is clearly the product of a trustworthy organisation. It is essential that you know where a piece of work has originated because you need to be sure of the quality and reliability of any information you use.

## 5.7 Citing from chapters written by different authors

Some books may contain chapters written by different authors. When citing work from such a book, the author who wrote the chapter should be cited, not the editor of the book.

## 5.8 Secondary referencing

Secondary references are when an author refers to another author's work and the primary source is not available. When citing such work the author of the primary source and the author of the work it was cited in should be used.

According to Colluzzi and Pappagallo as cited by Holding et al. (7) most patients given opiates do not become addicted to such drugs.

## 5.9 Citing a direct quotation

If a direct quote from a book, article, etc. is used you must:

- Use single quotation marks (double quotation marks are usually used for quoting direct speech).
- State the page number.

Simons et al. (3) state that the principle of effective stress is 'imperfectly known and understood by many practising engineers' (p.4).

## Secondary referencing

Avoid secondary referencing where possible. If it is not possible to obtain the original work reference the secondary source not the primary resource. Only reference the source that you have used.

## 5.10 Citing an image/illustration/table/diagram/ photograph/figure/picture

You should provide an in-text citation for any images, illustrations, photographs, diagrams, tables, figures or pictures that you reproduce in your work and provide a full reference as with any other type of work.

They should be treated as direct quotes in that the source should be acknowledged and page numbers shown; both in your text where the diagram is discussed or introduced, and in the caption you write for it.

In-text citation:

Table illustrating checklist of information for common sources (8: p.22).

**or**

'Geological map of the easternmost region of São Nicolau' (9: p.532).

## 5.11 Citing from multimedia works

If you need to cite a multimedia work, you would usually use the title of the TV programme (including online broadcasts) or video recording, or title of the film (whether on DVD, online or video) as the author. If a video is posted on YouTube or other video-streaming service then you should reference the person that uploaded the video (note this might be a username).

Using the Vancouver style, you don't have to include the author in your citation in the text of your work but you still need to include the author of the work in your reference list at the end of your work.



## 5.12 Citing from an interview or personal communication

Always use the surname of the interviewee/practitioner as the author.

## 5.13 Tips on good quotation practice

Quotations longer than two lines should be inserted as a separate, indented paragraph.

Smith (7) summarises the importance of mathematics to society and the knowledge economy, stating that:

‘Mathematics provides a powerful universal language and intellectual toolkit for abstraction, generalization and synthesis. It is the language of science and technology. It enables us to probe the natural universe and to develop new technologies that have helped us control and master our environment, and change societal expectations and standards of living.’ (p.11)

**or**

A recent UK report (7) summarised the importance of mathematics to society and the knowledge economy, stating that:

‘Mathematics provides a powerful universal language and intellectual toolkit for abstraction, generalization and synthesis. It is the language of science and technology. It enables us to probe the natural universe and to develop new technologies that have helped us control and master our environment, and change societal expectations and standards of living.’ (p.11)

As summarised by Smith (7):

‘Mathematics provides a powerful universal language and intellectual toolkit for abstraction,

generalization and synthesis ... It enables us to probe the natural universe and to develop new technologies that have helped us control and master our environment, and change societal expectations and standards of living.' (p.11)

You should only do this when you use a quotation taken from one paragraph.

When you use quotations within your text, sometimes you may want to insert one or two words in the quotation so that your complete sentence is grammatically correct. To indicate that you have inserted words into a quotation, these have to be enclosed in square brackets.

Smith (7) provides a number of reasons as to why mathematics is important, stating that it is:

'a powerful universal language and intellectual toolkit for abstraction, generalization and synthesis ... [and] enables us to probe the natural universe and to develop new technologies that have helped us control and master our environment, and change

societal expectations and standards of living.' (p.11)

## Writing skills

At your academic level you will be expected to develop your writing skills, and this includes being able to discuss and demonstrate an understanding of other people's work and ideas in your own words. This is called paraphrasing. It is much better to paraphrase than to use many quotations when you write.

## Shortening long quotations

If you want to insert a long quotation (over two lines) but do not want to include all of the text, you can remove the unnecessary text and replace it with '...'

## 6. How do I write a reference?

To write your own references you need different bits of information about each item that you read when you are researching a piece of work. These bits of information are called 'bibliographic' information.

For all types of references the key bits of information you need to start with are:

1. Author or editor
2. Date of publication/broadcast/recording
3. Title of the item

This will form the basis of each reference you have to write. You may find that some items are not as straightforward as others, so be aware of the following:

1. **Author or editor:** This means the primary (main) person who produced the item you are using.
2. **Date of publication/broadcast/recording:** This means the date the item was produced. It is usually a year, but if you are using a newspaper article, an email, or a television recording, you will have to include a full date (day/month/year) in your reference.
3. **Title of the item:** This means the primary (main) title of the item you are using. That sounds very obvious, but have a look at a web page and try to work out what the main title is. We would advise common sense in this situation – you have to identify the key piece of information that describes what you have used, and will allow the reader of your work to identify that information.

### Websites with no author

If you are using a website or web page without an author, you can use what is called a 'corporate author'. This will usually be the name of the organisation or company to whom the website or web page belongs.

The following table tells you about some of the variations you should look for when you are collecting your reference information.

|                           | 1. Primary author/editor   | 2. Date of publication  | 3. Primary title of item  |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Email</b>              | Name of the person who wrote the email   | The full date the email was sent: day/month/year  | Subject of the email. This may include RE: or FWD:  |
| <b>Journal article</b>    | Name of the person or persons who wrote the article  | The year the journal issue was published  | Title of the article (not the title of the journal)   |
| <b>Newspaper article</b>  | Name of the journalist, or if there is no journalist name, the name of the newspaper   | The full date on which the article was published: day/month/year  | Title of the article (not the title of the newspaper)   |
| <b>Website</b>            | This can be tricky. Use an individual name if you can find one, or the name of the organisation or company to whom the website belongs | Usually the current year, the year when the website was last updated, or the latest date next to the copyright statement/symbol | Title of the website  |
| <b>Web page</b>           | This can be tricky. Use an individual name if you can find one, or the name of the organisation or company to whom the website belongs | Usually the current year, but if the web page has a full date of publication, you may also need that: day/month/year            | Title of the web page. You will need to use the title of the website if the web page doesn't have an individual title |
| <b>TV broadcast</b>       | Title of the programme, or if the programme is part of a series, use the series title  | The year the programme was broadcast  | Title of the programme (it does not need to be written twice if you used it as the author information)                |
| <b>Personal interview</b> | Name of the person being interviewed   | The full date on which the interview took place: day/month/year   | No title needed   |
| <b>Book chapter</b>       | Name of the author of the chapter  | The year the book was published   | Title of the book chapter (not the title of the book)   |

Depending on the type of material you want to reference you will also need other bits of information, such as:

- Name of publisher
- Place of publication
- Page numbers
- Volume number
- Issue number
- URL (website or web page address)
- DOI (Digital Object Identifier – for published outputs)
- Title of conference proceedings  
Report number
- Book or conference editor  
(if not your primary author)
- Book or conference title  
(if not your primary title)
- Journal title (the **journal article title** will be your primary title)
- Date of access (for websites and web pages)

The more references you have to write, the more familiar you will be with what you need to know. But the best advice we can give is to check our guides, ask us, or check with your lecturers.

## 7. How do I write a reference list?

This is your list of all the sources that have been cited in the text of your work. The list is inclusive showing books, journals etc., listed in one list, not in separate lists according to source type.

- When using the Vancouver style, the reference list should be in numerical order and each number matches and refers to the one in the text.
- The list should be at the end of your work.
- Books, paper or electronic journal articles, etc., are written in a particular format that must be followed.

## 8. Example of a reference list

(1) Errami M, Garner H. A tale of two citations. *Nature*. 2008;451(7177): 397–399.

(2) Watkins PJ. *ABC of Diabetes*. 5th ed. London: Blackwell Publishing; 2003.

(3) Simons NE, Menzies B, Matthews M. *A Short Course in Soil and Rock Slope Engineering*. London: Thomas Telford Publishing; 2001.

(4) Goldacre B. Dore – the media’s miracle cure for dyslexia. *Bad Science*. Weblog. <http://www.badsience.net/2008/05/dore-the-medias-miracle-cure-for-dyslexia/#more-705> [Accessed 5th July 2025].

(5) Goldacre B. Trivial Disputes. *Bad Science*. Weblog. Available from: <http://www.badsience.net/2008/02/trivial-disputes-2> [Accessed 20th July 2025].

(6) Department of Health. *Living well with dementia: a national dementia strategy*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-well-with-dementia-a-national-dementia-strategy> [Accessed 23rd July 2025].

(7) Smith A. *Making mathematics count: the report of Professor Adrian Smith's inquiry into post-14 mathematics education*. London: The Stationery Office; 2004.

(8) Pears R, Shields G. *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. Bloomsbury Study Skills. 13th ed. London. Bloomsbury Academic; 2025.

(9) Ramalho R, Helffrich G, Schmidt DN, Vance D. Tracers of uplift and subsidence in the Cape Verde archipelago. *Journal of the Geological Society*. 2010;167(3): 519–538. doi:10.1144/0016-76492009-056

The layout for each type of publication can be found on the following pages. If you are using the bibliographic software RefWorks, you should use the 'Imperial College Vancouver' style to format your reference list and citations correctly.

## 9. What is a bibliography?

There may be items which you have consulted for your work, but not cited. These can be listed at the end of your assignment in a 'bibliography'. These items should be listed in alphabetical order by author and laid out in the same way as items in your reference list. If you can cite from every work you consulted, you will only need a reference list. If you wish to show to your reader (examiner) the unused research you carried out, the bibliography will show your extra effort. **You will not need to number each work listed in your bibliography.**

Always check the guidance you are given for coursework, dissertations, etc., to find out if you are expected to submit work with a reference list and a bibliography. If in doubt, ask your lecturer or supervisor.

## 10. How to write references for your reference list and bibliography: Vancouver style

Your lecturers consider accurate and consistent referencing to be an important part of your academic work. Check your course guidelines so you know which style of referencing to use. The following examples are in two parts:

- the information you should collect about each piece of work you use; and
- how this information is presented when you write a full reference.

If the work you need to reference has more than six authors, you should list the first six authors, followed by 'et al.'

If you cannot find the type of work you need to provide a reference for, please contact your librarian for more help.



Example:

Petrie KJ, Muller JT, Schirmbeck F, Donkin L, Broadbent E, Ellis CJ, et al. Effect of providing information about normal test results on patients' reassurance: randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal*. 2007;334(7589): 352–354  
doi:10.1136/bmj.39093.464190.55

### **Book: print**

- **Author/Editor** (if it is an editor always put (ed.) after the name)
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **Series title and number** (if part of a series)
- **Edition** (if not the first edition)
- **Place of publication** (if there is more than one place listed, use the first named)
- **Publisher**
- **Year of publication**

Simons NE, Menzies B, Matthews M. A Short Course in Soil and Rock Slope Engineering. London: Thomas Telford Publishing; 2001.

## Book: online/electronic

- **Author/Editor** (if it is an editor always put (ed.) after the name)
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **Series title and number** (if part of a series)
- **Edition** (if not the first edition)
- **Place of publication** (if there is more than one place listed, use the first named)
- **Publisher**
- **Year of publication**
- **URL**

Boden I. *Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine*. 11th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1093/med/9780198844013.001.0001>

## Book: chapter in an edited book

- **Author of the chapter**
- **Title of chapter** followed by, **In:**
- **Editor** (always put (ed.) after the name)
- **Title of book** (this should be in italics)
- **Series title and number** (if part of a series)
- **Edition** (if not the first edition)
- **Place of publication** (if there is more than one place listed, use the first named)
- **Publisher**
- **Year of publication**
- **Page numbers** (use 'p.' before single and multiple page numbers)

Partridge H, Hallam G. Evidence-based practice and information literacy. In: Lipu S, Williamson K, Lloyd A. (eds.) *Exploring methods in information literacy research*. Wagga Wagga, Australia: Centre for Information Studies; 2007. p.149–170.

## Journal article: print

- **Author**
- **Title of journal article**
- **Title of journal** (this should be in italics)
- **Year of publication**
- **Volume number**
- **(Issue number) or (article number) if available**
- **Page numbers of the article**

Chhibber PK, Majumdar SK. Foreign ownership and profitability: Property rights, control, and the performance of firms in Indian industry. *Journal of Law & Economics*. 1999;42(1): 209–238.

## Journal article: online/electronic

Most online articles will have a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) and you should use this in your reference.

Always check your student handbook and coursework guidance as some lecturers/tutors will provide specific guidance on the use of DOI or URL.

If you read the article in a full-text database service, such as Factiva or EBSCO, and do not have a DOI or direct URL to the article you should use the database URL.

- **Author**
- **Title of journal article**
- **Title of journal** (this should be in italics)
- **Year of publication**
- **Volume number**
- **(Issue number) or (article number) if available**
- **Page numbers of the article**
- **URL or DOI** (if available)

Errami M, Garner H. A tale of two citations. *Nature*. 2008;451(7177): 397–399. [www.nature.com/nature/journal/v451/n7177/full/451397a.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v451/n7177/full/451397a.html)

**or**

Wang F, Maidment G, Missenden J and Tozer R. The novel use of phase change materials in refrigeration plant. Part 1: Experimental investigation. *Applied Thermal Engineering*. 2007;27(17–18): 2893–2901. doi:10.1016/j.applthermaleng.2005.06.011

**or**

Read B. Anti-cheating crusader vexes some professors. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 2008;54(25). <http://global.factiva.com>

## Preprint journal articles

It is likely you will find articles available online prior to being submitted to the peer review procedure and published in a journal. These articles are preprints and may be placed in an online repository or on a publisher's website (but not in a specific journal issue). Preprints are sometimes updated at different stages of the publication process so you should try to make it clear which version you are citing. If an article based on the preprint has been published in a journal, then if possible read and cite the published version.

- **Author/s**
- **Title of journal article**
- **Submitted to/To be published in** (if this information is with the article)
- **Title of journal** (in italics)
- **Name of repository** (in italics)
- **[Preprint]**
- **Year of writing**
- **Version number** (if available)
- **URL or DOI** (include **[Date of access]** if there is no version number)

Wu Y, Minervini P, Stenetorp P, Riedel S. Training Adaptive Computation for Open-Domain Question Answering with Computational Constraints. To be published in ACL-IJCNLP 2021. ArXiv [Preprint] 2021. Version 1. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2107.02102v1>

**or**

Kalita R, Flanagan W, Lightley J, Kumar S, Alexandrov Y, Garcia E, et al. Single-shot phase contrast microscopy using polarisation-resolved differential phase contrast. *BioRxiv* [Preprint] 2021. doi: 10.1101/2021.04.14.437846 [Accessed 6th July 2021].

### Conference proceeding: individual paper

- **Author**
- **Title of conference paper** followed by, **In:**
- **Editor/Organisation** (if it is an editor always put (ed.) after the name)
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **Place of publication**
- **Publisher**
- **Year of publication**
- **Page numbers** (use 'p.' before single and multiple page numbers)

Wittke M. Design, construction, supervision and long-term behaviour of tunnels in swelling rock. In: Van Cotthem A, Charlier R, Thimus J-F, Tshibangu J-P. (eds.) *Eurock 2006: multiphysics coupling and long term behaviour in rock mechanics: Proceedings of the International Symposium of the International Society for Rock Mechanics, EUROCK 2006, 9–12 May 2006, Liège, Belgium*. London: Taylor & Francis; 2006. p.211–216.

## Standard

- **Name of Standard Body/Institution**
- **Standard number**
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **Place of publication**
- **Publisher**
- **Year of publication**

British Standards Institution. BS EN 1993-1-2:2005.  
*Eurocode 3. Design of steel structures. General rules.*  
*Structural fire design.* London: BSI; 2005.

## Report

- **Author/Editor** (if it is an editor always put **(ed.)** after the name)
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **Organisation**
- **Report number:** (this should be followed by the actual number in figures)
- **Year of publication**

Leatherwood S. *Whales, dolphins, and porpoises of the western North Atlantic.* U.S. Dept. of Commerce.  
Report number: 63, 2001.

## Map

- **Author** (usually the organisation responsible for publishing the map)
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **Scale**
- **Place of publication** (if there is more than one place listed, use the first named)
- **Publisher**
- **Year of publication**

British Geological Survey. *South London*,  
270. 1:50 000. London: BGS; 1998.

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## Web page/website

- **Author/Editor** (use the corporate author if no individual author or editor is named)
- **Title** (this should be in italics)
- **URL**
- **[Date of access]**

European Space Agency. *Rosetta: rendezvous with a comet*. <http://rosetta.esa.int> [Accessed 15th June 2015].

## Email: personal

Personal emails should be referenced as personal communication, unless you have permission from the sender and receiver to include their details in your reference list.

- **Sender**
- **Email sent to**
- **Name of receiver**
- **Date, month and year of communication**

Harrison R. Email sent to: Mimi Weiss Johnson.  
10th June 2014.

## Personal communication

- **Name of practitioner**
- **Occupation**
- **Personal communication**
- **Date when the information was provided**

Law J. Engineering consultant. Personal communication. 26th March 2014.

## Lecture/presentation

- **Name of lecturer/presenter**
- **Title of lecture/presentation** (this should be in italics)
- **[Lecture/Presentation]**
- **Title of module/degree course** (if appropriate)
- **Name of institution or location**
- **Date of lecture/presentation**

Wagner G. *Structural and functional studies of protein interactions in gene expression*. [Lecture] Imperial College London. 12th December 2006.

## NICE Guidelines

If you are referencing the paper version follow the guidance for a book reference or if you are referencing the online version it is recommended to follow the advice for referencing a website. Please check your student handbook or assignment guidance for any variations.

- **Author/corporate author** (Use the full name of NICE at the time of publication e.g. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE))
- **Title [No. of guideline if available]** (this should be in italics)
- **Date of publication**
- **URL** (if available)
- **[Date of access]**

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), *Tuberculosis: NICE Guideline [NG33]*. 2016. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng33> [Accessed 27th May 2017].



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## 11. Acknowledging and referencing GenAI tools

### Acknowledging

You should include a statement to acknowledge your use of GenAI tools for all assessed work, in accordance with guidelines from your department or course team.

### Referencing

Referencing guidance is provided on the library website [www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/generative-ai-guidance](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/generative-ai-guidance)

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## 12. Sources of further help

### **For more referencing examples:**

[www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/reference-management](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/reference-management)

### **Want to use reference management software?**

Library Services supports RefWorks, Mendeley and Zotero for undergraduate and Master's students, and EndNote for postgraduate research students and staff.

### **For information and training workshops:**

[www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/reference-management](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/library/learning-support/reference-management)

### **To contact your librarian for more advice:**

[www.imperial.ac.uk/library/subject-support](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/library/subject-support)

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## Contact us

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