

# Essay Writing

Unit 3C – How to Use Evidence: Avoiding Plagiarism

**INDEPENDENT LEARNING RESOURCES**

Learning Centre



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

*This unit's place in the whole module:*

Unit 1A How to be analytical:  
What is analysis?

Unit 1B How to be analytical:  
Setting up a taxonomy

Unit 2A How to structure an essay:  
Developing an essay structure

Unit 2B How to structure an essay:  
Writing introductions and conclusions

Unit 3A How to use evidence:  
Developing an argument out of the evidence

Unit 3B How to use evidence:  
Supporting your argument with the evidence

**Unit 3C How to use evidence:  
Avoiding plagiarism**

Unit 4A How to develop an argument:  
Being persuasive

Unit 4B How to develop an argument:  
Being critical

## UNIT 3C      **How to use evidence: Avoiding plagiarism**

### OBJECTIVES OF THIS UNIT

After you have finished this unit, we hope you will be able to:

- use appropriate quoting and reporting strategies
- use language strategies to avoid plagiarism

### IDENTIFYING YOUR PROBLEMS WITH USING EVIDENCE

If you have been having difficulty in using evidence when you are preparing and writing your essays and assignments, your marker may have made a comment on your writing similar to these:

- *"You have made some good points but you have not substantiated them."*
- *"Where are your references?"*
- *"You need to show me that you have done the reading on this topic."*
- *"I know the literature myself so you don't need to just tell it all to me: What I want to know is - what is your position?"*
- *"You have plagiarised parts of this essay from several sources. See me!"*

### INTRODUCTION TO THIS UNIT

So far in this module, we have been focussing on how to develop your argument and then how to present the argument with the evidence to support it. In this part, we will examine the language that you need to be able to present your evidence effectively, and to make sure that you are not plagiarising from the original sources.

### 1. WAYS OF REFERRING TO A SOURCE

There are several different ways that you can use information from a source as evidence in your own essay:

quote	<i>(this means using the exact words from the source, and enclosing the words within quotation marks "...")</i>
ways of referring to a source	
- paraphrase	<i>(this means interpreting all the information in a source, and writing it using a combination of your own words and those of the source)</i>
report	
- summarise	<i>(this means interpreting the information in a source, and writing it in a condensed or shortened form using a combination of your own words and those of the source)</i>

### 2. WHETHER TO QUOTE OR REPORT

Here are some points you should think about when quoting or reporting:

- a) The proportion of your essay which can be quotes from sources should not be too great. Some departments may have a specific ruling on how much can be quoted, for example, no

- more than 10% of the words can be quotes.
- b) Quotes should only be used when the exact same words are essential for conveying the meaning. Otherwise a paraphrase or summary should be used.
  - c) A quote should never be used by itself to make a point. It should always appear along with the point that you want to make, or the statement of your argument.
  - d) Only quote if the words in the quote are clearly important and add something significant to the meanings you have already made in expressing the point.
  - e) The connection between your point and the quote supporting it should be made very clear for the reader.
  - e) If the ideas from a particular source have become common knowledge and are no longer thought of as the intellectual property of one person, then it may not be necessary to give a reference at all.

### Exercise 1

Examine the following extracts from students' essays on the economic effects of tobacco use. Which essay extracts are using quotes from the evidence in an appropriate way?

- a) *The use of tobacco within the community can have a positive economic impact. Tobacco is a valuable commodity as it "is easy to grow and provides a ready source of cash to the small farmer" (UNFAO, 1978). Moreover, "thousands of small retail traders would be severely limited in their ability to continue their business and to employ shop assistants if not for sales of tobacco" (Small Retailers' Association, 1982).*
- b) *The majority of governments extract huge taxes from the tobacco industry, particularly at the point of sale. For example, the Chinese government takes 60% of the price of a packet of cigarettes (Mathews, 1978) and the government of NSW gains "substantial revenues" (NSW Cancer Council, 1985:21).*
- c) *One argument for the growth and use of tobacco is that "it is easy to grow and provides a ready source of cash to the small farmers"(UNFAO, 1978).*

### 3. WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of someone else without acknowledging who they belong to. It is a type of cheating because you appear to be claiming that the ideas or words are your own original thoughts. Plagiarism can happen when you

1. use the ideas or words from a source but do not acknowledge your source
2. copy the exact words of the source without using quotation marks
3. copy most of the source and only use some of your own words

It is important to try to interpret the source as much as possible in your own words. Then your lecturer can see that you understand the ideas and concepts in your sources and that you can use these to develop your own argument. You are not expected to be able to write the ideas as well as the original author, in fact it might be impossible for you to do so. However you are expected to interpret these ideas for your own essay purpose. To avoid plagiarising, you need to:

1. understand completely the varying arguments in your sources
2. be clear about your own position or thesis and the purpose of your essay
3. interpret the information in your sources to support your thesis and develop your own argument.

We have looked at these areas in Units 3a and b. Now we will look at some useful language

strategies which you can use to help you to avoid plagiarism when you are summarising and paraphrasing sources.

#### 4. LANGUAGE STRATEGIES FOR PARAPHRASING AND SUMMARISING

A successful summary or paraphrase combines some of the language of the source and some of your own language. You need to be able to manipulate grammar and vocabulary in a skilful way to do this well and to avoid plagiarism. Let's look at some of these ways of manipulating the language.

##### Language strategy 1 : putting more information into the noun group

###### Exercise 1

The following extracts compare summaries and paraphrases to those parts of the source on which they are based. Try to analyse how the language of the source has been changed:

Source:

*Thousands of small retail traders would be severely limited in their ability to continue their business and to employ shop assistants if not for sales of tobacco.*

Student text:

*The role of the finished product ensures the economic viability of thousands of small retail outlets and thus the job security of many thousands of people (Small Retailers Association Report, 1982)*

The above example illustrates one of the most important language strategies for changing the language of the source. In the original source, 17 words are needed to express the idea in the form of a sentence, with its own subject and verb. In the student text, only 8 words are needed and these have all been put into an enlarged noun group. This is a language strategy that is more commonly associated with summarising, because it is a way of CONDENSING information.

Section from source text	Section from student text
be severely limited in their ability to continue their business	economic VIABILITY
be severely limited in their ability to employ shop assistants	job SECURITY

Notice the way that the many words used in the source text are summed up by just one abstract noun (viability, security) which becomes the Head of the noun group. Other information from the source is put into the noun group to tell us more about the Head. This information comes before the Head or after the Head:

Information in the noun group BEFORE the Head	Information in the noun group AFTER the Head
ECONOMIC viability	the economic viability OF THOUSANDS OF

	RETAIL OUTLETS
JOB security	the job security OF MANY THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE

## Language strategy 2 : taking information out of the noun group

### Exercise 2

Try to analyse how the language of the source has been changed in this example:

Source:

*The land used to raise tobacco is not available to raise food, and this too may contribute to malnutrition and higher mortality in developing countries.*

Student text:

*Many farmers use land which should be used for growing food crops to grow tobacco, and as a consequence the health of these farmers many be compromised (UNFAO, 1977p38)*

### Exercise 3

Examine the following examples of sources together with the student texts that are based on them, and see how the language has been changed. Can you recognize other language strategies which are being used by the student writers?

#### Source 1:

*While total consumer spending (plus exports) now amounts to about \$19 billion and supports jobs for 1.3 million people, the cost to US citizens in lost production and sickness, health care and loss of life and property destroyed by fire totals \$27.5 billion. (Miller, R. H. The Economic Importance of the US Tobacco Industry, Washington D.C. US Department of Agriculture, May 1982, p187.)*

Student Summary a.

*In the USA it has been estimated that tobacco use costs the community \$27.5 billion whereas it earns only \$19 billion. (Miller, R.H.)*

Student Summary b.

*The total monetary cost to the US of tobacco related sickness and loss in 1982 was \$27.5 billion dollars. (US Dept of Agriculture, 1982)*

#### Source 2:

*Tobacco is easy to grow and provides a ready source of cash to the small farmers who still constitute most of the world's producers*

Student Summary a.

*It is important to recognize that most of the world's tobacco crop is grown as a cash crop by small scale producers, often in developing countries*

Student Summary b.

*The ease with which tobacco is cultivated enables many small farmers in the Third World to gain a cash income (UNFAO, 1978).*

#### Exercise 4

Examine the following sections from student writing and compare them against the original pieces of evidence they refer to. The original evidence is presented below the student writing. Are they acceptable summaries, or are they too close to the original, and therefore plagiarism?

#### Student writing:

- a) *Unfao reports that because of its ease of cultivation, tobacco provides money directly to small farmers and the Small Retailers Association reports that thousands of small retail traders would have difficulty in continuing their business and employ assistants if they did not sell tobacco.*
- b) *It is widely accepted that tobacco is easy to grow and is a good source of income for small farmers who still constitute most of the world's producers (UNFAO, 1978). In addition, a large number of small retail traders would be forced out of business with the consequent loss of employment if there was a decline in the tobacco industry (Small Retailers Association Report, 1982).*
- c) *It is important to recognize that most of the world's tobacco crop is grown as a cash crop by small scale producers, often in developing countries (UNFAO, 1978) and the role of the finished product ensures the economic viability of thousands of small retail outlets and thus the job security of many thousands of people (Small Retailers Association Report, 1982)*

#### Original evidence:

*Tobacco is easy to grow and provides a ready source of cash to the small farmers who still constitute most of the world's producers.*

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Yearbook 1977, Volume 31.  
Rome, UNFAO, 1978, p290.

*Thousands of small retail traders would be severely limited in their ability to continue their business and to employ shop assistants if not for sales of tobacco.*

Small Retailers Association Report, 1982, p42.

#### Language strategy 3: changing word form

When you change a verb to a noun, an adverb to an adjective, a noun to a verb etc, the effect of this change is to make a different sentence structure from the original.

Original	Paraphrase
the <b>cost</b> to US citizens	tobacco use <b>costs</b> the community
Tobacco is <b>easy</b> to grow	The <b>ease</b> with which tobacco is cultivated

#### Language strategy 4: alternating active and passive verbs

Original: Active	Paraphrase: Passive
Tobacco use <b>supports</b> jobs for 1.3 million people in the USA.	1.3 million jobs <b>are supported</b> by tobacco use in the USA

#### Language strategy 5: using synonyms

Using synonyms for words in the original text is very useful for paraphrasing, but should not be overused. If you use a synonym dictionary or a thesaurus, make sure that your synonym is appropriate in the context. You can check this by using the Reader's Digest Word Finder or the Cobuild Dictionary.

Original	Paraphrase: Synonym
Tobacco is easy to <b>grow</b>	tobacco is <b>cultivated</b>
small farmers	small scale producers

#### Language strategy 6: using different logical connectors or different structures to express logical connections

Original	Paraphrase
and <b>this too may contribute</b> to malnutrition and higher mortality in developing countries.	as <b>a consequence</b> the health of these farmers may be compromised

#### Language strategy 7: changing the order of information

Original	Paraphrase
<b>Thousands of small retail traders</b> would be severely limited in their ability to continue their business and to employ shop assistants if not for sales of tobacco.	<b>The role of the finished product</b> ensures the economic viability of thousands of small retail outlets and thus the job security of many thousands of people (Small Retailers Association Report, 1982)

**Language strategy 8: synthesizing information from different sources to suit your purpose.**

Be careful when you are synthesizing information from a number of sources that your synthesis is not too close to the wording of the original sources.

***Student writing: synthesised***

*It is important to recognize that most of the world's tobacco crop is grown as a cash crop by small scale producers, often in developing countries (UNFAO, 1978) and the role of the finished product ensures the economic viability of thousands of small retail outlets and thus the job security of many thousands of people (Small Retailers Association Report, 1982)*

***Student writing: unsynthesised***

Don't "stitch together" pieces from a variety of sources. Once again remind yourself of your own purpose in writing your essay. Look at this example of "stitching" from a student's essay. This student has not realized that the idea of "loss of property destroyed by fire" does not even go together with the cost of tobacco-induced diseases.

*Tobacco only becomes a net cost to society when a large enough proportion of the population smokes to suffer the impact of tobacco-induced diseases resulting in lost production from sickness, health care, loss of life and property destroyed by fire.*

**Exercise 5**

- a. Practice the language strategies for paraphrasing and summarising by synthesizing the additional piece of evidence given below with some of the evidence you have already seen:

***New evidence:***

*The benefits of leaf growing in a number of developing countries are very significant: as a conduit for improved agricultural technology, for value added, and, because of the labor-intensity of the operation, as a source of rural employment.*

Gray, P.H. and I. Walter (1986) "The Economic Contribution of the Tobacco Industry". In Tollison, R.D.[Ed] Smoking and Society: Towards a more balanced assessment, Lexington Books, Massachusetts, page 267.

***Old evidence:***

*Tobacco is easy to grow and provides a ready source of cash to the small farmers who still constitute most of the world's producers.*

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Yearbook 1977, Volume 31. Rome, UNFAO, 1978, p290.

*The land used to raise tobacco is not available to raise food, and this too may contribute to malnutrition and higher mortality in developing countries.*

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Yearbook 1977, Volume 31. Rome, UNFAO, 1978, p38.

- b. Paraphrase the additional piece of evidence given below:

*Because price has a known effect on influencing tobacco consumption, particularly among children, it could be expected that tobacco consumption habits would have varied across Australia due to these price differences. There is no research study*

*which has looked at this question and it is likely that because the price changes for the most part have been small and relatively insignificant, when inflation is taken into account, the influence of price has probably been less important than other influences on smoking behaviour.*

Whinstanley, M. [Ed] (1989) Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, Action on Smoking and Health Limited, Surry Hills, Sydney, page 45.

### Exercise 6

In this exercise, you have an opportunity to consolidate all that you have learned about using evidence. Here is all the evidence that you have already been given on the tobacco topic, with several additional pieces of evidence. Use all this additional evidence to further develop the essay draft that we began to develop at the end of Unit 3a which is reprinted at the end. In doing this, you should consider these questions:

- a) Where would you add in the new information?
- b) Would you need to develop a new area in your taxonomy and in the sequence of the argument?
- c) Would you paraphrase, summarise or quote from this new information?

#### **All the evidence:**

1. *Tobacco is easy to grow and provides a ready source of cash to the small farmers who still constitute most of the world's producers.*  
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Yearbook 1977, Volume 31. Rome, UNFAO, 1978, p290.
2. *Overall, despite the payments to small farmers and distributors and the substantial revenues to commercial firms and governments, tobacco becomes a net cost to society whenever a large proportion of the population smokes enough to suffer the impact of tobacco-induced diseases.*  
Tobacco - Hazards to Health and Life. NSW Cancer Council, Position Paper, 1985, p21.
3. *The land used to raise tobacco is not available to raise food, and this too may contribute to malnutrition and higher mortality in developing countries.*  
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, Yearbook 1977, Volume 31. Rome, UNFAO, 1978, p38.
4. *In China, about 60% of the price of a packet of cigarettes goes to the government in the form of taxes.*  
Mathews, J. Between Puffs, Chinese are told of Cigarette Perils. Washington Post, 6/9/78, p17.
5. *Thousands of small retail traders would be severely limited in their ability to continue their business and to employ shop assistants if not for sales of tobacco.*  
Small Retailers Association Report, 1982, p42.
6. *Yet, in the United States at least, where tobacco was first developed as a colonial product for export, the health costs of domestically consumed tobacco now far outweigh the dollar returns to producers, manufacturers, exporters, and tax collectors. While total consumer spending (plus exports) now amounts to about \$19 billion and supports jobs for 1.3 million people, the cost to US citizens in lost production from sickness, health care, and loss of life and property destroyed by*

*fire totals \$27.5 billion.*

Miller, R.H. The Economic Importance of the US Tobacco Industry. Washington D.C., US Department of Agriculture, May 1982, p187.

7. *The benefits of leaf growing in a number of developing countries are very significant: as a conduit for improved agricultural technology, for value added, and, because of the labor-intensity of the operation, as a source of rural employment.*  
Gray, P.H. and I. Walter (1986) "The Economic Contribution of the Tobacco Industry". In Tollison, R.D.[Ed] Smoking and Society: Towards a more balanced assessment, Lexington Books, Massachusetts, page 267.
8. *Because price has a known effect on influencing tobacco consumption, particularly among children, it could be expected that tobacco consumption habits would have varied across Australia due to these price differences. There is no research study which has looked at this question and it is likely that because the price changes for the most part have been small and relatively insignificant, when inflation is taken into account, the influence of price has probably been less important than other influences on smoking behaviour.* Whinstanley, M. [Ed] (1989) Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, Action on Smoking and Health Limited, Surry Hills, Sydney, page 45.
9. *Despite being linked to the Consumer Price Index, Federal Excise collections [on the sale of tobacco products] have shown a marked decline when considered in real dollars. This is as a consequence of two factors: declining consumption... and a reduction in weight of tobacco per cigarette...*  
Whinstanley, M. [Ed] (1989) Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, Action on Smoking and Health Limited, Surry Hills, Sydney, page 42.
10. *...it is sometimes argued that the government would save money in the absence of smoking since it would not have to pay certain sickness benefits to smokers and pensions to spouses of deceased smokers. Against this are old age pension savings which occur if smokers' life expectancy is lower than that of non-smokers.*  
Hunt, B. (1987) Submission to the Industries Assistance Commission Investigation of Tobacco Growing and Manufacturing Industries. Appendix 3: Measures affecting tobacco consumption, Tobacco Institute of Australia, page 12.
11. *In November 1985 the Prices Surveillance Authority reported that the three major tobacco manufacturers operating in Australia achieved, on average, higher profits than Australian industry generally, and had been one of the more profitable industries for many years. This was attributed to the industry's relative immunity to the economic recession, largely because of the comparatively inelastic nature of demand for cigarettes, and advancements in mechanisation.*  
Prices Surveillance Authority. Report No 6 - Inquiry in relation to the supply of cigarettes, Matter no PI/85/2, 26 November 1985.

***The essay draft:***

There is no doubt that in many countries the tobacco industry plays a major economic role in terms of generating income and employment. However it is questionable as to whether these benefits outweigh the costs to society of tobacco use. Tobacco use results in a number of costs to society, primarily health costs. **(eg. cost in lost production from sickness, health care and loss of life and property total \$27.5b.)** These costs are largely born by governments who are responsible for funding health care systems. However it is really society as a whole which contributes through tax revenue to these health care systems. On the other hand it must also be remembered that governments themselves benefit **(eg. in China, 60% goes to government)**. However the extent to which governments benefit must be compared to the costs of tobacco use. **(eg. in USA, health costs outweigh dollar returns)**. It is certainly the case that tobacco production generates economic activity, employment and large revenues. Most of the world's tobacco is grown **(by small farmers)**, although **(land used to raise tobacco is not available for food)**. The distribution of the finished product supports **(thousands of small retailers)**. In the US, the tobacco industry employs **(1.3million)**. Overall, the revenues earned from the tobacco industry **(are substantial, eg. \$19b. in USA)**. However these revenues must be compared with **(costs to society when population suffers disease)**. Therefore, in economic terms, the tobacco industry has become a financial burden to the community since it generates far greater costs which affect all members of a society through their tax support of health care systems.

# ANSWER KEY

## ESSAY MODULE

### Unit 3C

## How to use evidence: Avoiding plagiarism

#### Exercise 1

- a) This text quotes too much from the sources. However the writer does make good points which are then supported by the quotes.
- b) This text uses quotation sparingly, and it is well-integrated into the student's own text.
- c) This text is not making enough of the point and is letting the quote make the point.

#### Exercise 2

In this example, the focus is changed from "the land" being used, to "the farmers" who use the land.

#### Exercise 4

- a) This piece of writing is very close to the original sources, although probably not close enough to be called plagiarism. The writer is simply summarising the source information, without providing an original point of view. No reference is provided to the publication source.
- b) This piece of writing has moved further away from the sources towards developing the writer's own argument, although it is perhaps still a little too close to the wording of the sources.
- c) The writer's argument is recognizable in this text. It represents a good example of the synthesis of source information.

#### Exercise 5

- a) *A suggested synthesis:*  
Although tobacco cultivation can benefit Third world economies by providing rural employment, income and developing agricultural technology (UNFAO, 1978: 290; Gray and Walter, 1986: 267), it may also be responsible for malnutrition and higher levels of mortality since less food can be grown (UNFAO, 1978: 38).

b) ***Two suggested paraphrases:***

- i. Although the effect of price on tobacco use has not been studied, it is widely accepted that price does affect tobacco use especially tobacco consumption by children. However other influences on tobacco consumption are likely to be stronger since the price of tobacco has not varied to a great extent (Whinstanley, 1989: 45).
- ii. Price variation is known to have an effect on tobacco consumption, especially among children. Although, the effect of this variation has not been studied, it is unlikely to be of significance since the variations in tobacco price are usually small (Whinstanley, 1989: 45).

**Exercise 6**

Evidence 7 belongs with the discussion of the primary sector of industry or geopolitical regions of the world.

Evidence 8 and 11 belong with the area of supply/demand sectors of the economy.

Evidence 9 belong in the discussion of government management.

Evidence 10 belongs in the discussion of health costs.

***The elaborated essay draft:***

There is no doubt that in many countries the tobacco industry plays a major economic role in terms of generating income and employment. However it is questionable as to whether these benefits outweigh the costs to society of tobacco use. Tobacco use results in a number of costs to society, primarily health costs. **(eg. cost in lost production from sickness, health care and loss of life and property total \$27.5b.) (however, governments may also save by not paying old age pensions due to shorter life spans of smokers.)** These costs are largely born by governments who are responsible for funding health care systems. However it is really society as a whole which contributes through tax revenue to these health care systems. On the other hand it must also be remembered that governments themselves benefit **(eg. in China, 60% goes to government) (although revenues have been declining in real dollars)**. However the extent to which governments benefit must be compared to the costs of tobacco use. **(eg. in USA, health costs outweigh dollar returns)**. It is certainly the case that tobacco production generates economic activity, employment and large revenues. **(tobacco companies generate large profits.)**

Most of the world's tobacco is grown **(by small farmers) (with various benefits to developing countries)**, although **(land used to raise tobacco is not available for food)**. The distribution of the finished product supports **(thousands of small retailers)**. In the US, the tobacco industry employs **(1.3million)**. Overall, the revenues earned from the tobacco industry **(are substantial, eg. \$19b. in USA)**. However these revenues must be compared with **(costs to society when population suffers disease)**. Therefore, in economic terms, the tobacco industry has become a financial burden to the community since it generates far greater costs which affect all members of a society through their tax support of health care systems.