

# THE GOLDEN RULES OF REFERENCING

**These golden rules apply to all referencing, whichever guidelines you are using.**

## CONSISTENCY

This is the first and most important golden rule! Use only the referencing guidelines given to you by your college or university department. If you do not have these, ask your tutor for a copy. Click here [[link to Referencing guidelines information sheet](#)] for an example of some referencing guidelines.

## FOLLOW YOUR GUIDELINES ABSOLUTELY

You must follow your referencing guidelines exactly; for example the order of the elements (parts) of the reference, punctuation, capitals, italics and underlining. If you do not do this, you may lose marks. If the source of information you are referencing does not fit any of the examples in your guidelines, put down enough information for the reader to go and find that source, in a format as near the examples as you can.

## GATHER THE INFORMATION YOU NEED FOR THE REFERENCE WHILST YOU HAVE THE ITEM

Get into the habit of gathering the information you need about your sources of information *whilst you have the item*. If you do not do this for a book and you take it back to the library, you may be unable to find the book again, because someone else has taken it out. You therefore cannot use the book in your work because you cannot reference it properly, and you may be suspected of plagiarism. Websites are also often difficult to find again, once they are no longer on your computer screen.

## USE INDEX CARDS OR AN ELECTRONIC DATABASE TO STORE YOUR REFERENCES

You can use small index cards to note down the details of all the sources of information you use. Alternatively, you can use the Access database or a computer programme such as EndNote or RefWorks (ask your tutor about these). Any of these systems will make it easy to organise your references in alphabetical order of authors' surnames, which is how the list of references at the end of your work is normally arranged.

## IN THE CASE OF BOOKS, TAKE YOUR INFORMATION FROM THE TITLE PAGE AND ITS REVERSE

This is because the correct and complete details are on these pages; those on the cover of the book may be incomplete. In the case of websites, the detail may be on the home page or at the bottom of the pages.