



What is Reference?

Reference Sources

Reference Sources serve a variety of purposes. They are meant to *refer to*, for fact-checking, and quick contextual understanding of a topic area. They are not meant to read in full.

Academic reference is compiled by experts. It can provide:

- background or introductory information on a topic
- contextual information around a topic
- statistical or tabular data as well as technical instruction
- keywords, or words that are used to denote people, places, events, concepts, theories and happenings - all helpful for understanding a topic area *quickly*

Academic reference is a good starting point for your research project, as it can provide keywords that you can use to search books and academic articles in the same topic area.

Types of Reference:

Handbooks & Manuals

Handbooks and manuals contain "handy" information about a topic area, including basic factual and statistical information including tables, charts and graphs that may be useful for your research paper. Some handbooks and manuals are books of instruction for working professionals providing basic "how-to" information such as personnel, laboratory, and management procedures.

Encyclopedias

An encyclopedia is a long-entry A-Z listing of information in a topic area. There are two types of encyclopedias: general or subject encyclopedias.

- [General Encyclopedias](#)

General encyclopedias provide introductory information (such as a definition, description, history, statistics) on a variety of subjects and may include a brief bibliography at the end of each topic

- [Subject Encyclopedias](#)

Subject encyclopedias concentrate on specific topics within a discipline (such as education, philosophy, art, technology). Like general encyclopedias, they include definition, description, history, statistics, as well as more detailed and comprehensive information. Extensive bibliographies which list other materials on the topic are often needed.

Dictionaries

A dictionary is a short-entry A-Z listing of information in a topic area. Like encyclopedias, this is a great reference for obtaining relevant keywords that describe the topic area you're researching.



Dr. John Micallef Memorial Library

Corpus Christi College / St. Mark's College

If you are unfamiliar with the terminology associated with your research topic, consult a subject dictionary. Subject dictionaries provide definitions or short explanations of the terms and concepts used in a specific discipline or field.

Directories

Directories direct the reader to the contact information of people, associations, institutions, companies, etc., providing such identifying information as addresses, telephone numbers, personnel, publications, as well as other unique data. Directories can be useful for locating organizations which may supply specialized information on a topic.