

Technical English, Lecture 7: Bibliography

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Why?

There are several reasons for citing the references.

- The reader may be interested to know more details available in the original source.
- The reader may want to check the correctness of the information. If it is incorrect, the reader will notify (or blame!) the right person.
- It is problematic to seem as if you are claiming other people's work. It is punishable to lie and claim other people's work.
- The references are useful for historical reasons.

A reference is a source to which you can refer for authoritative facts.

The bibliography is

- a list of printed works having some common theme
or
- a list of the sources of information to which a person refers.

Within the text you put a *citation* to a reference in the bibliography.

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When shall I cite?

Obviously, too many citations may distract the reader from the main flow of thought. However,

you must cite direct quotations, figures, tables, slides, . . . ;

you should cite substantial information;

and

you should not cite general facts.

Have you ever "borrowed" information from the web or scanned a printed material then used it?

Which sources?

Since a reference is a source for *authoritative* facts that the reader might want to *view*,

- you should avoid proprietary materials, trade magazines, and the Internet;
- you should consider the case of whether to cite general standards or not depending on the level of the readership;
and
- you should cite archival materials such as journal and conference publications as well as books.

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Format within the work

There are various conventions. The most widely spread methods use

- a footnote below the page,
- the name of the author and the year as in [Fahmy, 2003] with the full reference details at the end of the work,
or
- a numeric reference as in [1] or¹ with the reference details at the end.

The first two are long (and repetitive in the case of footnotes) but are independent of the location in your work and are easier to verify for correctness.

The last one is terse but depends on the location and is harder to verify. Technical journals prefer this one and you will have to use it.

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Look at our history

الحديث له متن وسند.

السند يصنف إلى متواتر أو مشهور أو عزيز أو غريب.

الحديث الصحيح سواء أكان متواتراً أم لا هو ما رواه

١. عدل

٢. ضابط (تام الضبط)

٣. عن مثله من أول السند لمنتهاه

٤. بدون شذوذ

٥. ولا علة.

Can you become what our historians call “عالم محقق”?

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Format at the end

The “end” might be the end of each chapter in a book or the end of the whole book. Sometimes it is both.

The references appear at the end

- in their order of appearance,
- alphabetically,
or
- chronologically.

Use a good tool to help you.

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There are many styles depending on the place of publication.

The IEEE transactions style:

1. N. Takagi, "Generating a power of an operand by a table look-up and a multiplication," in *Proceedings of the 13th IEEE Symposium on Computer Arithmetic, Asilomar, California, USA*, pp. 126–131, July 1997.
2. S. F. Oberman and M. J. Flynn, "Design issues in division and other floating point operations," *IEEE Transactions on Computers*, vol. 46, pp. 154–161, Feb. 1997.

The "plain" style: (notice the order)

1. Stuart F. Oberman and Michael J. Flynn. Design issues in division and other floating point operations. *IEEE Transactions on Computers*, 46(2):154–161, February 1997.
2. Naofumi Takagi. Generating a power of an operand by a table look-up and a multiplication. In *Proceedings of the 13th IEEE Symposium on Computer Arithmetic, Asilomar, California, USA*, pages 126–131, July 1997.

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Levels of reputation

In general, journals are better than conferences. This means that some conferences are better than some journals. ⇒ Find out about your own field.

- Journals (transactions) are more technical than "letters" which in turn are better than magazines.
- For conferences, the order is
 1. conferences (discussions of common interests), then
 2. symposiums (formal meetings with short addresses on a topic), and finally
 3. forums (public meetings for open discussions).

Commercial and industrial exhibits are *not* good references.

(Unless you are referring to the date a company released a product for example.)

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- The reputation of a publication depends on many factors and each field has its own order.
- The reputation takes a few years to build up.
- Reputed places have a good peer review process usually with multiple reviewers and probably two revisions.
- The acceptance rate at some locations might be an indicator but it is sometimes incorrect.

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Your own lists

For your own reference, make the following lists according to your specific field of research.

1. The major journals and magazines.
2. The major conferences.
3. The major academic researchers and what they are doing.
4. The major industrial researchers and what they are doing.
5. The major funding agencies and what they are requesting in their calls for proposals.

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