

## REFERENCE LIST VS. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This document explains the difference between two sections of a report that come after the main content: the reference list and the bibliography.

You may have used these terms interchangeably in the past, but they are actually very different in terms of their purpose.

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### REFERENCE LIST

This is a very common section in a wide range of technical documents. It is also called "References" or "Works Cited." It is a list of all the sources that were used **AND CITED** in a document. Each entry in this section should have at least one matching in-text citation somewhere in the document.

The order of the references varies by citation style. In most author-date styles, the order is alphabetical. It starts with the source whose primary author's family name is closest to the beginning of the alphabet, and continues in that fashion. For enumerated styles, the order is chronological. Typically, the first source that appears is listed as source #1, the second is source #2, and so on. Sources that appear again later do not get relisted; they maintain their original number.

A reference list is used to allow the reader to view the sources that were used in the writing of a report. This would allow the reader to verify the information in the document is correct, as well as to scrutinize the reliability or validity of the source. An example of a reference list can be seen [here](#).

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Despite how commonly you might hear this word, actual bibliographies are rare in most technical documentation. Bibliographies contain all the sources that were used to inform the content of a document, **INCLUDING SOURCES THAT WERE NEVER CITED**. For this reason, bibliographies can be much longer than a reference list. Other than length and the name of the section, bibliographies are identical in format to reference lists. However, both author-date and enumerated styles use alphabetized bibliographies.

A bibliography is used to demonstrate that the author has read a variety of sources on the subject matter; this would be important in cases where a prominent author in the field is not referenced in the text, but the document's author wants the reader to know that the work of the prominent author was consulted [1]. Nevertheless, bibliographies are rare since prominent authors are usually incorporated in well-planned papers, and most situations require a list of references rather than a bibliography.

### REFERENCES

- [1] D. Jennings, "What Is a Bibliography and When Should I Write One?," Study.com, 4 June 2012. [Online]. Available: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-a-bibliography-and-when-should-i-write-one.html>. [Accessed 8 August 2021].