

Concerning the use of Wikipedia for papers and other submissions at Northwind Seminary:

Source reliability is an important reason why Wikipedia is not to be used for academic purposes at Northwind Seminary. Information on Wikipedia is not considered a reliable academic source for information.

Reliable sources in general include items such as university-level textbooks, books published by respected publishing houses, magazines, and certain newspapers and news organizations such as Reuters, United Press International or the Associated Press, which are responsible for accuracy. Some electronic media can also be considered as reliable if subjected to the same criteria as print sources.

If available, academic, and *peer-reviewed* publications are usually the most reliable sources in topics such as history, religion, medicine, and science. However, keep in mind that some scholarly material may be outdated, in competition with alternative theories, controversial within the relevant field, or largely ignored by the mainstream academic discourse because of lack of citations of it. Try to cite the current scholarly consensus when available.

Material from reliable non-academic sources, particularly if it appears in respected mainstream publications, can also be considered.

There are three types of sources: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

While **primary sources** are often the core of a research paper or project, researchers also depend on other types of sources to provide context, perspective, and support for the analysis of primary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic or question under investigation. They are usually created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Often these sources are created at the time when the events or conditions are occurring, but primary sources can also include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories recorded later.

Secondary sources analyze, interpret, and evaluate primary sources. Secondary sources typically reference or summarize primary sources and other secondary

sources. Examples of secondary sources include scholarly works, textbooks, journal articles, histories, and biographies.

Tertiary or reference sources summarize and synthesize information about a topic from other sources. Tertiary sources can be a useful tool for locating primary and secondary sources. Examples of tertiary sources include encyclopedias and dictionaries, chronologies, almanacs, directories, indexes, and bibliographies.

At best, Wikipedia could be considered a tertiary source that could be a useful tool for locating reliable primary and secondary sources. That is the only use for Wikipedia in academic writing at Northwind Seminary and not as a source to be referenced in footnotes.