

Guidelines for Writing a Reference Card

Subject

Subject materials should be specific to one topic. A subject based on a topic that is covered in a college course is a good choice. Reference cards that apply to one course, such as Calculus 1, C++ Data Structures, are ideal. Reference cards for non-students that apply to one specific topic are also ideal.

The goal of the card is for a student or professional to use it during a time when they have intense involvement in a subject area. Cards following this model are more likely to be used than a general card such as “Math” or “Programming”.

Content

The purpose of these reference cards is simply for reference, not first time exposure to the subject. So the content should be centered on commonly used information and concepts.

Reference cards can contain material covering the very basics of the subject up to advanced topics. It is at the discretion of the author to determine what material is relevant and useful for a person who would buy that reference card. Again, the content should reflect that of common courses and/or common tasks for non-students (programming languages, etc)

For cards related to courses, content should reflect the most commonly used equations, constants, tables, diagrams, and concepts. This should generally be enough to fill the card. Sometimes more information can be added, like advanced topics or more elaborate discussions of concepts.

Cards for non-students, such as for programming languages should contain all the syntax, data types, and basic usage for that subject. For programming languages, it should be assumed that the reader already knows how to setup and compile a program. Function reference is also good to include.

Things that people spend time looking up in books are excellent things to include in a reference card. Think about when you were learning a particular subject, and you always had to look through the book to page so and so to get a number or syntax. It's also good to have as much information as possible in these cards. The more the better, hence the 5pt font.

Layout

Graphic design will be done by a ‘graphic designer’ (me; Greg Book). When you submit your draft, you can include how you want layout done, like how sections might be laid out to make something clearer or more useful.

A difficulty in designing a reference card is fitting all the material you want on an 8.5" x 11" card with little or no unused space. When you are writing your card, you may want to try fitting the sections, in a common 5pt or 6pt font, on a sheet of paper, and rearrange your content accordingly. Try adding or deleting sections or parts of sections will fill in the blank spaces.

Once the first draft of the card has been laid out by the graphic designer, it will be clearer what information, if any, needs to be added or taken out or rearranged. A card might have to be revised a few times before it goes to print.

Proposal Format

A proposal should contain the following parts:

Category – What general area this is part of; math, chemistry, physics, programming, etc

Subject – The specific subject of the card; Physical Chemistry, Python, Calculus 1, etc

Target readers – Who you expect will want to read your card and use it. Students, programmers, etc. What level students? Undergraduate, graduate, med-school, etc. What professional fields would use it? IT, labs, etc.

Overall layout and sections – a broad overview of what sections you would include, and what kind of information would be included in each section.

Send your proposal to:

Reference Card Proposals
80 Kane Street B4
West Hartford, CT 06119
USA

-or-

refcard@gbook.org

After Your Proposal is Submitted

Your proposal will be reviewed, and you will be contacted. Since each subject of a reference card has different requirements, a proposal may need to be revised and submitted more than once.

There are no deadlines for submissions or for drafts if your proposal is accepted. If it is accepted you will need to begin the draft process.