

**6. [A paraphrased email from a customer] I saw on a review website that you use Wikipedia for some of your information. Isn't it common knowledge that Wikipedia is highly inaccurate, not reliable or credible? Why would you use Wikipedia?**

[Our response to this customer]

"Thank you for writing to raise your concerns about the references cited in my text *Novare Physical Science*. Since you raised several issues, this email will be rather lengthy. So here is a short summary of where I am going: First, the quote in [handinhandhomeschool.com](http://handinhandhomeschool.com) which you referenced is inaccurate, as I will explain. Second, most textbooks cite no references at all and textbook users are completely uninformed about textbook content sources. I cited a few—but certainly not all—sources for specific reasons. Finally, all of my texts have been reviewed by scientists and teachers with excellent credentials. You may be confident that my texts are both scientifically accurate and faithful to historic Christian belief.

To begin, the quote taken from [handinhandhomeschool.com](http://handinhandhomeschool.com) stated, "the textbook's reference page states that the author made liberal and virtually exclusive use of [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) and [commons.wikimedia.org](http://commons.wikimedia.org) to fact-check his material." In fact, page 335 of the text [*Novare Physical Science*] actually states, "the excellent websites [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) and [commons.wikimedia.org](http://commons.wikimedia.org) were used as sources of information and for checking details throughout the book." By no means were these sites "exclusively" used for information. In fact, hundreds of other sources inform the writing of my texts—the texts, articles, and books I have read and consulted in a lifetime of study. But since I did fact check names, dates, and so on on using [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), I said so on the references page by way of giving credit. As for [commons.wikimedia.org](http://commons.wikimedia.org), this is not a source of the "information" we would think of as content; it is a site for sharing public domain and free-license images, such as historic photos and images produced by NASA, and some of the images in the text were taken from that site. There is certainly nothing illegitimate about using images available at [commons.wikimedia.org](http://commons.wikimedia.org).

There are several important comments to make at this point. First, textbooks do not generally cite references at all, because textbooks are not usually based on original research. The information in textbooks is available from thousands of different sources. No textbook I know of cites a list of content sources. My books generally don't cite content sources either. Even so, I felt it was appropriate to cite a few sources from which specific quotes or other details were obtained.

Second, this may go without saying but composition is different from fact checking. All content in my textbooks is my own original composition, certainly not lifted from [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) or any other reference.

Third, regarding the quality of the information on [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), note that while wikipedia is not regarded as a scholarly resource, it is highly regarded within the scientific community as a reliable source for scientific information, and every article includes citations of the actual scholarly sources from which the article is drawn. In fact, the scientific community seems to take delight in maintaining the entries in wikipedia in the interests of promoting reliable scientific information. (Articles without citations are flagged as unacceptable until citations are provided.) I use wikipedia as a source for fact checking, and for that, at least in the sciences, it is excellent. Of course, wikipedia is *not* perfect, but neither is any other source. One must always cross-reference information with other sources, and I do that constantly with all the sources I use—even other textbooks. But it is simply incorrect to say that [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) is "highly inaccurate, not reliable or not credible." In fact, the four links at the bottom of this message below my signature refer to studies attesting to the accuracy of wikipedia. My own scientist friends all regard the science pages at [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) as reliable sources of information. Again though, I use [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) mainly for fact checking and not as a primary content source.

Before closing, I would like briefly to address the issue of credibility by mentioning the scientific credentials of one of my reviewers, Dr. Chris Mack. Chris is one of the world's leading experts in the field of photolithography. He has five BS degrees (including physics and chemistry), an MS in Electrical Engineering, and a PhD in Chemical Engineering. He is an adjunct professor at the University of Texas at Austin, and is the author of over 170 peer-reviewed scientific publications. In 2009 Chris was awarded the prestigious Frits Zernike Award for Microlithography, and in 2010 he was elected Fellow of

the IEEE. Chris is currently the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Micro/Nanolithography, MEMS, and MOEMS (JM3)*. Chris has read all of my books and has been most stringent in seeing that my scientific descriptions are accurate. Chris (along with others) has read all of my books and has directly helped me to assure that they are as scientifically accurate as finite writers and editors can make them.

I could address your concerns at further length, but I think I will let this explanation suffice. Naturally, if you have additional questions, please let me know."

[http://news.cnet.com/Study-Wikipedia-as-accurate-as-Britannica/2100-1038\\_3-5997332.html](http://news.cnet.com/Study-Wikipedia-as-accurate-as-Britannica/2100-1038_3-5997332.html)

<http://blog.wikimedia.org/2012/08/02/seven-years-after-nature-pilot-study-compares-wikipedia-favorably-to-other-encyclopedias-in-three-languages/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Errors\\_in\\_the\\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica\\_that\\_have\\_been\\_corrected\\_in\\_Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Errors_in_the_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica_that_have_been_corrected_in_Wikipedia)

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2013/12/06/its-an-interesting-world-where-wikipedia-is-more-accurate-than-both-the-cia-and-the-wall-street-journal/>