How to write a glossary

Study Guide

A **glossary** is a list of terms, phrases, or images and their definitions written in plain language.

The purpose of a glossary is to aid the reader in understanding and familiarising uncommon words or content-specific words within a written document. Readers can easily access a glossary of terms for explanation when they need it while reading.

Having a glossary as part of your document helps to identify and define the key terms you are using and aids users in understanding terms they may be unfamiliar with.

The glossary is often placed at the end of a written work and is organised in alphabetical order by keyword.

What to include in a glossary?

- Identify the most important words by reading over the document for terms that may be unfamiliar to the average reader. These keywords may need to be further explained in more detail of what the words mean for clearer understanding.
- Allow a reader to help identify difficult words in the text that may be confusing or unclear to a common reader who is not an expert in the topic area of study.
- List all the uncommon words together in one document and write out a small summary for each term. Keep the definitions clear and simple, between one to four sentences long in total.
- Ensure the definitions are concise by using the simplest language possible that is easy to read and comprehend.

How to format a glossary?

- Arrange the terms in alphabetical order, starting with “A” and ending with “Z” once completed to help a reader find the information efficiently.
- Separate the key terms with bullet points and put a space between dot points so they are easy to read. Choose one formatting style to keep the glossary in uniform.
- Make sure the indent is consistent throughout the document.
- Use **bold** or *Italics* to make the terms stand out from the definitions and make them easier to spot in the text.
- Place the Glossary towards the end of the document before the Bibliography as a separate page.

Other points to remember:

- A simple **cross-reference** entry can be included. “See [another term]” note, if the definition refers to other terms listed in the glossary.
- Do not include abbreviations in the glossary. A list of abbreviations should go in a separate list to avoid confusion.
- Glossaries do not necessarily need to be cited as these are considered common knowledge.
- In **formal** writing, quoting a glossary entry from another source is to be cited.

Sample entry:

- **Gender bias** - is behaviour that shows preferential treatment toward one gender over the other which often results in favouring men and or boys over women and or girls.
- **Gender disparities** - the gap between men and women, boys and girls that reflect inequality in access to resources, status, and well-being.