Background Section Tip Sheet

According to your textbook, the background section should provide an introduction to the project and answer the following research questions [1]:

- “Provide the basic theory behind the concept.”
- “How is it currently being done”?  
- “What are the limitations of current designs or technology”?  
- “What are the similarities and differences between your concept and existing technologies”?  
- “Are there existing or patented technologies that may be relevant to the design? If so, what are they and why are they relevant”?  

Some General Tips:

- Make sure your sources are authoritative – DO NOT cite Wikipedia.
- Be concise but clear. The reader can’t ask you for clarification.
- One sentence, such as “Patent XXXXXX applies to our project,” does not provide enough details to your readers. How is it applicable? How does it differ? Is your project an improvement?
- Synthesize the background information with respect to topic. If you have two references that discuss a topic, compare them to one another and to your project. Do not summarize each reference separately.
- Since this is a technical report, be sure to provide enough details about the basic theories to show that you understand the scientific principles, and when discussing current technologies (state of art) to show a level of understanding.
- Be sure to show the project is worthwhile and feasible when you write the background section with the support of the literature.
- Be sure to include in-text citations for your references to clarify what information was found in a particular reference. Citations aren’t needed for common knowledge [2]. Citations enable the reader to read what you read and give proper credit to the author.
- Find a citation style and be consistent. IEEE Citation Style is based on Chicago Citation Style which can be consulted for further style information. Mendeley could help, go to Citations using Mendeley tab on your Course Guide.

References
