How Do I...?
Evaluate Sources

This guide will help you:

- *Ask the right questions when evaluating sources*

- *Understand what sources are scholarly*

- *Evaluate different kinds of sources like books and articles*

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What Is A Scholarly Source?

Scholarly sources (also referred to as academic, peer-reviewed, or refereed) are written by experts in a particular field and serve to keep others interested in that field up to date on the most recent research, findings, and news. These resources will provide the most substantial information for your research and papers.

What is Peer Review?

When a source has been peer-reviewed, it has undergone the review and scrutiny of a review board of colleagues in the author's field. They evaluate this source as part of the body of research for a particular discipline and make recommendations regarding its publication in a journal, revisions prior to publication, or, in some cases, reject its publication.

Why Use Scholarly Sources?

The authority and credibility evident in scholarly sources will contribute a great deal to the overall quality of your papers. Use of scholarly sources is an expected attribute of academic course work.

How Can I Tell If a Source Is Scholarly?

The following characteristics can help you differentiate scholarly sources from those that are not. Be sure and look at the criteria in each category when making your determination, rather than basing your decision on only one criteria.

Criteria For Evaluating Sources

Authors
- Are author names included?
- Are the author's credentials provided?
- Are the credentials relevant to the information provided?

Publishers
- Who is the publisher of the information?
- Is the publisher an academic institution, scholarly, or professional organization?
- Is their purpose for publishing this source evident?

Audience
- Who is the intended audience of this source?
- Is the language geared toward those with knowledge of a specific discipline or the general public?

Content
- Why is the information being provided or the article written?
- Are sources cited?
- Are there references to other writings on this topic?
- Are charts, graphs, tables, and bibliographies included?
- Are research claims documented?
- Are conclusions based on evidence provided?
- How long is the source?

Timeliness
- Is the date of publication evident?
- Is currency of the information crucial to your research?

Additional Tips For Evaluating Specific Source Types

Books
- Look at the publication date. Is the information current enough for your purposes?
- Look at where the book was published. If published at a University Press or U.S. Government Printing Office, that could be an indicator of scholarly content.

Articles
- Is biographical information for the author provided?
- Who is the publisher?
- How frequently is the periodical published?
- How many and what kinds of advertisements are present? For example, is the advertising clearly geared toward readers in a specific discipline or occupation?

Web Pages
- What is the domain of the web page?
- Who is publishing or sponsoring the page?
- Strip back the URL to discover the source of the page.
- Is contact information for the author/ publisher provided?
- How recently was the page updated?
- Be particularly wary of bias when viewing web pages. Anyone can create a web page about any topic. You must verify the validity of the information.