

## Finding Sources

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## Learning to Use the library

The university library is the most helpful resource to find the majority of your sources for your research paper. Here at UNT, that means using the University of North Texas Libraries. To find out more about what is available to students, go to [www.library.unt.edu](http://www.library.unt.edu). This website has essential information. You can schedule a tour of the library by looking at the list of guided tours. You can also learn to use the on-line catalogs and get help from a reference librarian. The people working at the reference desk are there to help you, so do not hesitate to ask them for help. If you find a source through UNT's library catalog, it will be necessary to write down the call number so that you can locate that source in the library in order to read it and get the necessary information to include in your reference list, or works cited page.

## Searching On-Line

The Internet is another way to find sources that you need by using on-line catalogs. In addition to those, you can also use sites like *EBSCO* research database. This site is available through UNT and can help you search through an immense number of academic journals for your sources. You should use *key words* in your search. Make sure that you skim all articles for acceptability before you print them. Many students like to search the Internet as a whole, which is generally not recommended when writing academic research papers for several reasons. First of all, you can waste a lot of time searching, never finding what you need for your topic. Secondly, many Internet sites are not academic. Instead they are commercial. These sites use information to support their own self-interests. The claims they make may not be based on research and may not be evaluated by others. Thirdly, many of these sites use opinions rather than facts. Your research paper should contain *YOUR* opinions based on the research studies that you have read and compiled to support your thesis. The purpose of your research paper is not to support someone else's opinion. If you decide that the website you find is relevant to your topic and has facts that are based on research, you may use it, but you should limit your Internet sources to no more than two. The Internet should be used as a supplement to your well-

founded research from academic sources. It should not be used as the bulk of your reference list page.

## Analyzing Sources

Critical analysis of sources can be difficult, but there are some questions you can ask yourself to help you decide whether your source is scholarly or non-scholarly.

### Initial Appraisal

1. Is the author's name provided?

The author's name should be provided. If you see that author's name mentioned in other sources, chances are, he or she is a well-respected author in the field of your topic.

2. What is the date of publication?

If your topic involves the sciences or medicine, you need to use current information. A book published in 1970 about a specific disease may have already been made obsolete by recent research.

3. Who published the information?

Is the publisher a university press? If it is, you can be certain that the information is accurate.

4. If it's a journal, what is the title of the journal?

To distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly journals, it's necessary to look at the title. Some examples of scholarly journals are: *Applied Linguistics*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. These journals have research studies in them that are reviewed before publication and are subject to peer evaluation. The research published in scholarly journals follows accepted research practices, including the scientific method. These articles are substantial in length and are not usually accompanied by pictures although there may be some charts or graphs.

Another category of articles that may be used for sources in a research paper are found in news or general interest periodicals. These periodicals provide information for the general public. They may appear to be more exciting than scholarly journals, but the target audience is still an educated audience. Most of the major newspapers fall into this category, such as the *Dallas Morning News*,

or *the Washington Post*. In addition, this category includes magazines, such as *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *Economist*, or *American Heritage*.

Non-scholarly journals would be popular magazines or sensational periodicals. The articles tend to be short and have colorful pictures. Some examples are *Parenting*, *Fast Company*, and *Sports Illustrated*. These journals tend to be published monthly, whereas scholarly journals are published quarterly (four times a year). Some examples of sensational periodicals are the *National Inquirer* and the *Star*. These sources should be avoided when choosing sources for an argumentative research paper.

## Content Analysis

Once you have chosen your source and it meets the criteria of being scholarly outlined in the initial appraisal, it's necessary to read the information to decide if the content is not only useful in providing evidence for your thesis but also logical in reasoning. The information must be written objectively avoiding all emotionally charged language. Emotionally charged language uses phrases that purposely cause an emotional response in the reader. The language inflames people's emotions in a way that will cause them to agree with the author without requiring facts, objective information, or logical reasoning.

This is also the time to consider whether your source is a **primary** or **secondary source**. Primary sources are the raw research studies that were done to collect data to either support or refute a specific theory. For example, a primary research source might be the test results of people's reaction times after drinking 1 ounce of alcohol. Usually the theory is explained and the researcher makes a hypothesis (a guess) about the outcome. Often times, past research studies are mentioned in this introduction. Then the researcher describes how the experiment was done, how many subjects (people) were tested, and what the results were. At the end, the researcher draws conclusions based on the results of the experiment. A secondary source is one in which the research studies are cited in the article as evidence of a particular author's theories. The author will list the primary sources used for his/her research in a works cited area. It's a good idea to use both primary and secondary sources in your research paper.

## Using Internet Sources

As mentioned before, Internet websites should be used with caution, and no more than two should be used in your research paper. Look for websites that have .gov or .edu in the address. Websites with .com and .net are often commercial or personal websites, so you cannot be assured of the correctness of information on those sites. Sites which contain .org in the address can be used if

the site is a non-profit news or educational organization. However, you must be careful to avoid websites which contain .org in the address if they are organizations which are endorsing personal or political positions. Often, these sites are biased toward one side of an issue; therefore, they present facts in a misleading way to support a specific agenda. Remember that anyone with access to the Internet can put together a website and write anything.

To search the Internet use these commonly used Internet search engines:

<b><i>Search Engine</i></b>	<b><i>URL</i></b>
Ask	<a href="http://www.ask.com">http://www.ask.com</a>
Hotbot	<a href="http://www.hotbot.com/">http://www.hotbot.com/</a>
Infoseek	<a href="http://infoseek.go.com">http://infoseek.go.com</a>
Lycos	<a href="http://www.lycos.com">http://www.lycos.com</a>
Yahoo	<a href="http://www.yahoo.com">http://www.yahoo.com</a>
Excite	<a href="http://www.excite.com">http://www.excite.com</a>
AltaVist	<a href="http://www.altavista.com">http://www.altavista.com</a>

Following is a list of addresses for megasearches, which look for matches to your key word(s) in several search engines at the same time or one after the other.

<b><i>Megasearcher</i></b>	<b><i>URL</i></b>
Web Crawler	<a href="http://www.crawler.com">http://www.crawler.com</a>
Metacrawler	<a href="http://www.go2net.com/search.html">http://www.go2net.com/search.html</a>
Savvy Search	<a href="http://www.savvysearch.com">http://www.savvysearch.com</a>

## **[EVALUATING SOURCES \(VIEW QUESTIONS\)](#)**