Source Types

Criteria	Popular	Scholarly	Trade	Grey Literature	Primary Sources
Purpose (Intent)	To inform, entertain, or persuade about current events or popular opinion	To inform, report, or make available original research	To provide news, trends, or practical information in a particular field, trade, or industry	To disseminate research quickly or respond to a public issue	To share the author's thoughts, experiences, or ideas
Audience	General public	Scholars, researchers, and students of specific discipline or field	Practitioners of a particular field, trade, or industry	Professionals and researchers in the same field or industry and/or policy makers	General public, friends, fans, and/or followers
Creator	Professional writers, journalists, freelance writers or creators that deal with a variety of topics regularly	Scholars or researchers with extensive credentials and experience in the specific discipline or field	Professionals or freelance writers or creators with experience in a particular field, trade, or industry	Individual scholars, government agencies, non- profit organizations, businesses, and think tanks	Anyone – usually someone with personal experience about what you're writing about
Language (Tone)	Entertaining, non-technical language	Specialized terminology or jargon from the specific discipline or field	Specialized terminology or jargon used in the field or industry	Specialized terminology or jargon used in the field or industry	Very casual
References	Sources rarely cited	Sources always cited	Sources occasionally, but not usually cited. This depends on the publication	Sources are typically, but not always cited	Sometimes cited, but usually through links or @s rather than citations
Accountability	Content not evaluated by experts in the field; often published or produced by commercial organizations	Usually reviewed by a subject expert or board of subject experts (peer review)	Content may be evaluated by experts in the field; often published or produced by a trade association	Expert review differs for different kinds of grey literature. Many may not be reviewed at all	None

How to Find Different Types of Info

Popular

- Newspapers – Newspaper Source Plus is a library database that works great for this
    - You can also find news sources through the other library databases under Newspapers & News Sources on the databases list
- Magazines – search for the magazine title on library.gmu.edu and follow the links that come up

Scholarly

- Almost all library databases contain scholarly information: look for sources labeled scholarly, peer-reviewed, and/or academic.

Trade

- The easiest way to find trade publications is to search on Google to find publication names.
    - For example – political science trade publications
- Then, use the library's website to locate that publication

Grey Literature

- Government documents – Google is your best friend here. Try limiting to sites ending in .gov or .mil to find government information.
    - Example – foreign policy site:.gov
- The site function on Google also works for other websites – try .edu, .org, .co.uk, or any other endings.
    - You can even do parts of sites – nytimes.com
- Grey literature can also be found by Googling the creator's name. Other examples of searches to try include:
    - Political science expert writes
    - Environmental think tank publications
    - Religion site:.org

Primary Sources

- Finding these can be tough, but one of the best ways is looking at social media
    - Use hashtags and other searching on your favorite platform
    - You can also use the site tool from above:
        - Political science expert site:twitter.com
- Blogs, YouTube videos, podcasts, and other media also work as primary sources (this varies depending on your topic) – Google is your best friend here.