

Academic Research: Understanding and Using Research

As you search for sources for an academic research project, it is important to have a clear sense of the different types of sources you might need to find and how they contribute to the development of a sophisticated, original argument. Academic sources can fall into three primary categories and many different types.

Three Categories of Sources

Primary: Primary sources vary by discipline and can include historical and legal documents, eye-witness accounts, results of an experiment, statistical data, pieces of creative writing, and art objects. In the natural and social sciences, the results of an experiment or study are typically found in scholarly articles or papers delivered at conferences, so those articles and papers that present the original results are considered primary sources.

- **Secondary:** A secondary source is something written about a primary source. Secondary sources include comments on, interpretations of, or discussions about the original material. Secondary source materials can be articles in newspapers or popular magazines, book or movie reviews, or articles found in scholarly journals that evaluate or criticize someone else's original research.
- **Tertiary:** A tertiary source is a distillation and collection of primary and secondary sources.

Some Types of Sources

- News stories
- Scholarly books
- Peer-reviewed journals
- Articles in popular magazines
- Encyclopedias
- Documentary films, TV shows
- Government databases
- First-person accounts

Finding and Assessing Your Research

Before you begin researching, familiarize yourself with the kinds of research the assignment requires. Your instructor might ask you to use the Cuyamaca Library's research database or google scholar. In addition, your instructor might ask you to find peer-reviewed sources or different types of types of sources.

- Source requirements: _____

In order to successfully search for useful resources, you will need to collect a few keywords that you can use to search. Use your knowledge of the subject to gather a collection of words that you can search in

different combinations. You might also find it useful to revise your search terms based on the terminology you find in the first few useful articles you find.

- Keywords: _____
- Keywords (revised): _____

Using Your Sources to Your Advantage

Now that you have found some sources that you think will be useful for your paper, take a moment to consider the category and type of source. In addition, consider how this source would help your paper. As you continue to work on your paper, revisit the notes you collect here ask you integrate your research into you paper and create a Works Cited page

Source 1 –

First, provide a complete MLA citation:

Second, identify what category and type of source it is:

Third, to which of the assigned keywords does this source connect?

Fourth, if you were to use this source for a research paper, what is one way it could contribute to an argument about your topic/problem/question?

Source 2 –

First, provide a complete MLA citation:

Second, identify what category and type of source it is:

Third, to which of the assigned keywords does this source connect?

Fourth, if you were to use this source for a research paper, what is one way it could contribute to an argument about your topic/problem/question?

Source 3 –

First, provide a complete MLA citation:

Second, identify what category and type of source it is:

Third, to which of the assigned keywords does this source connect?

Fourth, if you were to use this source for a research paper, what is one way it could contribute to an argument about your topic/problem/question?

Source 4 –

First, provide a complete MLA citation:

Second, identify what category and type of source it is:

Third, to which of the assigned keywords does this source connect?

Fourth, if you were to use this source for a research paper, what is one way it could contribute to an argument about your topic/problem/question?

Source 5 –

First, provide a complete MLA citation:

Second, identify what category and type of source it is:

Third, to which of the assigned keywords does this source connect?

Fourth, if you were to use this source for a research paper, what is one way it could contribute to an argument about your topic/problem/question?

Source 6 –

First, provide a complete MLA citation:

Second, identify what category and type of source it is:

Third, to which of the assigned keywords does this source connect?

Fourth, if you were to use this source for a research paper, what is one way it could contribute to an argument about your topic/problem/question?