

Types of sources

One of the first steps of research is finding your sources after you have selected a topic. It can be an overwhelming task when the process begins. You may ask yourself, “What sources will I use? Where can I find them? Which source is the best?” These are all relevant questions.

Interviews are one way of collecting information for research. The person that you interview should be an expert or experienced in an event you want to know more about. Let’s say you are trying to find more information about the Holocaust. You could interview a professor or teacher who has studied this topic extensively or perhaps you know of someone who is a survivor of the Holocaust. Record your interview with audio equipment or on paper. Be sure to arrive with questions already in hand. The same should be done if you are taking notes from a **lecture**. Be sure to record the date and time of the lecture or interview.

Newspaper articles are a good source of information, especially if you are researching something current, like the economy or a presidential debate. However, a newspaper article can also cover an event that has happened in the past, many years ago. You can find newspaper articles online, in libraries, and at any store that sells them. *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* are reputable newspaper sources to reference.

Encyclopedias are almost a thing of the past. Yet, it is a good way to get information about static information or information that does not change. Articles about animals, types of governments, continents, and history can be found here. Today, however, more people access their **internet browser** to find out current and relevant information. Be sure that the website referenced is reliable. On the other hand, many encyclopedias also have online editions that can be edited easily for changes that occur overnight like in a country’s government or findings about new planets in our solar system.

Books abound in a library and you should always have several of these as sources to refer to. Try to find books that have been recently published – in the last two or three years, if available. Otherwise, make sure the author is reputable and the information in the text is reliable.

Scholarly articles found in **professional magazines** are a great way to get the most current information about your topic. Let’s say you are searching for information about the latest findings in cancer research. The *Journal of American Medical Association* would be a good place to start looking. In this type of reference, you are sure to get information from knowledgeable professionals. Again, look in your library, online, or sign up for a subscription yourself to stay informed. If you look online, many professional magazines keep previously published issues, but there may be a cost for you to look.

If you are conducting a literary analysis, comparing two texts, or any other type of paper about a work of literature, try looking for reviews of the work. **Literary reviews** are an excellent source when needed to support your thesis or argument. You can find these in literary magazines and some are compiled in books, as well.

Finally, many public and college libraries have online databases that you can access. **Online databases** give you access to magazines, newspapers, books, pictures, audio and other references all in one spot. Just be sure to make note of where you get your information from and give credit accordingly.