

# Evaluating Sources

Different publications have different purposes and are intended for different audiences. So it is important to consider their relevance and authority before you use them to support what you have to say. Three criteria to always consider when examining a source are:

1. **Timeliness**: is the research up-to-date, not superseded by new research?
2. **Authority**: authors credentials should be clearly visible -- are they experts in the field?
3. **Objectivity**: Is this an opinion piece or information/fact based?

<b>Academic vs. Popular Sources</b>	<b>Academic (Journal)</b>	<b>Popular (magazine/newspaper)</b>
Length	Longer, provides in-depth analysis	Shorter, broader overviews of topics
Authorship	Author usually an expert or specialist in the field. Name and Credentials of author(s) usually included (Ph.D., MD, etc.)	Author often a staff writer or journalist. Credentials are often not provided (usually have B.A.)
Audience	Written in specialized language of the field. Intended for scholars, researchers, students etc.	Non-technical language directed at general audience.
Format/Structure	More structured format. May include an abstract, lit review, methodology, conclusion, bibliography/footnotes	Article may not necessarily follow a structure.
Editors/Publisher	Reviewed and critically evaluated by experts in the field (Peer-reviewed). Sponsored or published by professional organizations, research institutions, universities or scholarly presses	Evaluated by editors on staff Published by commercial or trade publishers.
Credits/Documentation	Include a bibliography or works cited, proves that the document was researched thoroughly.	Usually not provided but reports or references are made within the body of the text
Special Features	Illustrations & graphs support text	Advertising and glossy
Examples	<i>American Sociological Review, Journal of Popular Culture, Sustainable Agriculture</i>	<i>Rolling Stone, Vogue, Time Psychology Today</i>

Adapted from Royal Roads University:

<http://library.royalroads.ca/infoquest-tutorials/articles/academic-vs-popular-sources>