

# Using Good Sources

Evaluating What You Find

Start



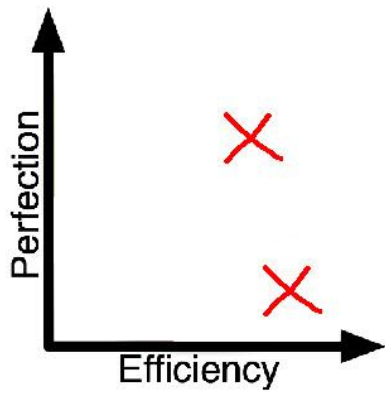
## Objectives

1. Importance of good sources
2. Criteria for evaluating sources

In this video, you'll find out why you need to be sure the sources you use in your paper are good ones. You'll also learn some important criteria for evaluating whether your sources are good or bad.

## Why You Need to Use Good Sources

First, we'll look at why you need to use good sources.



When most students are searching for sources, they try to find just as many sources as they need as quickly as they can, and move on.

Unfortunately, this isn't always the best approach.

It is better to focus on getting good sources than on finding sources fast.

That might take a bit more time and effort.

## Using Good Sources: Evaluating What You Find

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Why are good sources so important? Your sources form the foundation of your paper.

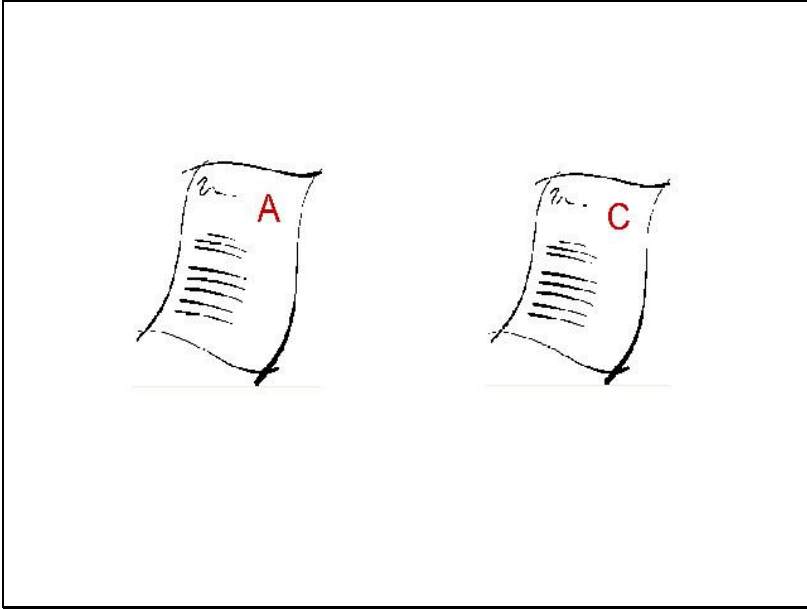
Just like in a house, a solid foundation is important. If you have good support, everything works the way it is supposed to.



If you don't have a good foundation, it causes problems.

Your arguments need to be supported properly, just like the walls of a house.

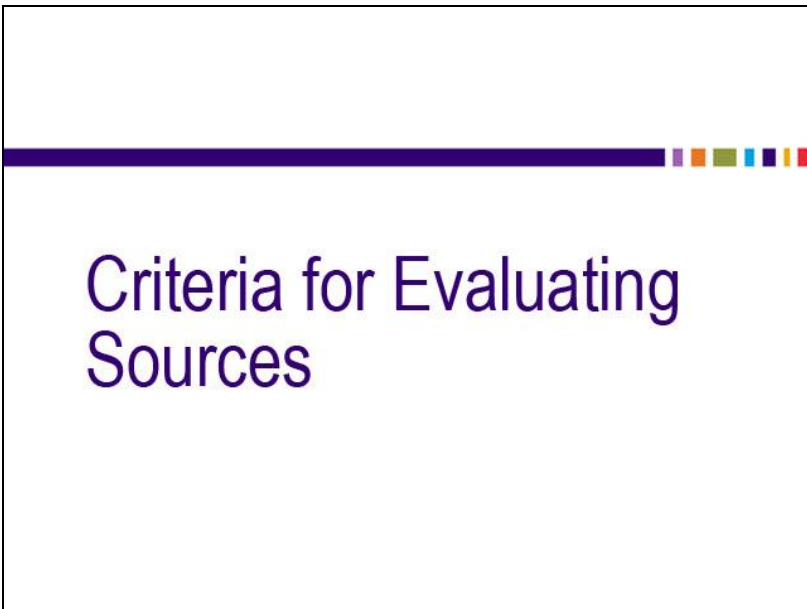
In either case, a bad foundation leads to a bad structure.



Starting off with good sources gives your paper a solid foundation that you can build on with confidence.

Starting off with bad sources means your paper won't be well supported.

You will run into difficulties when writing your paper, and your results won't be as good.



Now we know why good sources are important.

Next, we'll look at how we can judge whether a source is good or not.

## Criteria #1: Scholarly, Peer-Reviewed



There are two basic criteria to use when evaluating your sources.

The first is that the sources should be scholarly or peer-reviewed.

Nearly all of your assignments require you to use scholarly sources, whether they say so explicitly in the instructions or not.

**Journal of Communication** 2009, 19(3), 391-401

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

### Exploring Third-Person Differences Between Gamers and Nongamers

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**Abstract**

Students who play video games are often stereotyped as being socially and cognitively isolated. In this study, we compare the social and cognitive skills of gamers and nongamers. We find that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers. We also find that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers. We also find that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers.

**Introduction**

During the summer of 2007, we conducted a survey of 3,321 college students (N = 3,321) to explore the social and cognitive skills of gamers and nongamers. We found that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers. We also found that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers.

**Method**

3,321 students from 100 colleges and universities participated in the study. We used a survey to measure social and cognitive skills. We found that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers.

**Results**

In these studies, we focus on the specific perceptions of isolation and cognitive skills of gamers. We find that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers. We also find that gamers are more socially and cognitively isolated than nongamers.

**Table 1** Mean Scores by Gender, Social/Cognitive Skills of Video Game and Nongame Groups by Level of Video Game Play

		Level of Video Game Play		
		Low	Medium	High
Social Skills	M	1.86	2.35	2.86
	SD	1.05	1.40	.74
Cognitive Skills	M	2.78	3.34	3.88
	SD	1.2	1.4	.77
Control of Game	M	2.66	2.82	2.96
	SD	1.05	1.2	.81
Control of Game	M	2.34	2.5	2.52
	SD	1.0	1.27	.71

**Conclusions**

Anderson, C. A. (2008). An update on the effects of playing video games. *Journal of Communication*, 18, 119-122.

Anderson, C. A., & Dill, J. E. (2001). Effects of video game play on aggression: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 1061-1070.

Boyle, M. F., & Kim, D. (2007). The effects of video game play on social and cognitive skills. *Journal of Communication*, 17, 106-117.

Scholarly articles are written by people affiliated with a university.

They usually include an abstract or summary of the article.

The content consists of original research done by the authors, gives the method for the research study, and discusses the results or findings of the study.

There are many references to other sources given in a bibliography or list of references.

## What Else is Scholarly?

### Study: Measuring ecosystem goods and services

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Friday, November 29, 2013

Between 2000 and 2011, an area almost twice the size of the cities of Toronto, Montréal and Calgary combined was converted from agricultural and natural land to settled areas, according to a new study, "Measuring ecosystem goods and services in Canada," released today in *Human Activity and the Environment*. This article reported that the development of settled areas in and around cities and towns increased by 3,158 km<sup>2</sup> over the 11-year period.

Regionally, the largest shift to settled area occurred in the Lake Ontario and Niagara Peninsula sub-drainage area (SDA), comprising 627 km<sup>2</sup> (Map 1) mostly at the expense of agricultural land. Over this period, there was a 19% increase in the settled area occupying Canada's dependable agricultural land and a 29% increase on the very best Class 1 farmland.

		5 to 24	7815
Visible minority population	5,068,095	1,145,205	705,355
South Asian	1,262,865	305,100	180,410
Chinese	1,216,565	210,000	100,925
Black	783,795	221,000	100,010
Filipino	410,700		100,005

Some other things also count as scholarly sources.

The major example is research done and published by authorities working at a major government body like Statistics Canada or the United Nations.

These agencies often gather and provide data and statistics and write reports based on their research findings.

This would also be considered scholarly, and therefore a good source for most assignments.

## What ISN'T Scholarly?



WIKIPEDIA  
The Free Encyclopedia



You'll find lots of other information out there that doesn't come from scholarly sources.

This includes blogs, social media, newspapers, magazines like Macleans, online sites like Wikipedia, and in fact most web sites.

Unless the information was published in a scholarly journal or government forum by an expert author with academic affiliation and credentials, it's not scholarly.

When can you use  
non-scholarly sources?

as primary  
sources



Normally, you wouldn't use information that isn't scholarly unless your instructions say you should.

The exception is if you use the information as a primary source.

Primary sources are sources that you do analysis on yourself.

A screenshot of a blog post. At the top, it says 'THE BLOG' in purple, followed by 'Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors'. To the right, it says 'HOT ON THE BLOG' in a purple box, with 'John Kerry' and 'Ben Cohen' listed below. Below this is a profile picture of Sarah J. Jackson, with her name and title 'Academic, Educator, and Writer'. To the right of her name are social media icons for FAN, RSS, EMAIL, Follow, and Like, along with a '26' in a box. The main title of the post is 'What's Wrong with Media Coverage of Women Olympians?' in a large, bold, black font. At the bottom left, it says 'Posted: 08/03/2012 10:58 am' and there is a small printer icon on the right.

For example, if I was doing a paper on media representations of female athletes, I could look at online news articles talking about female athletes.

To use these as primary sources, I would do an analysis to see how the news articles portray female athletes, and come up with an argument based on my analysis.

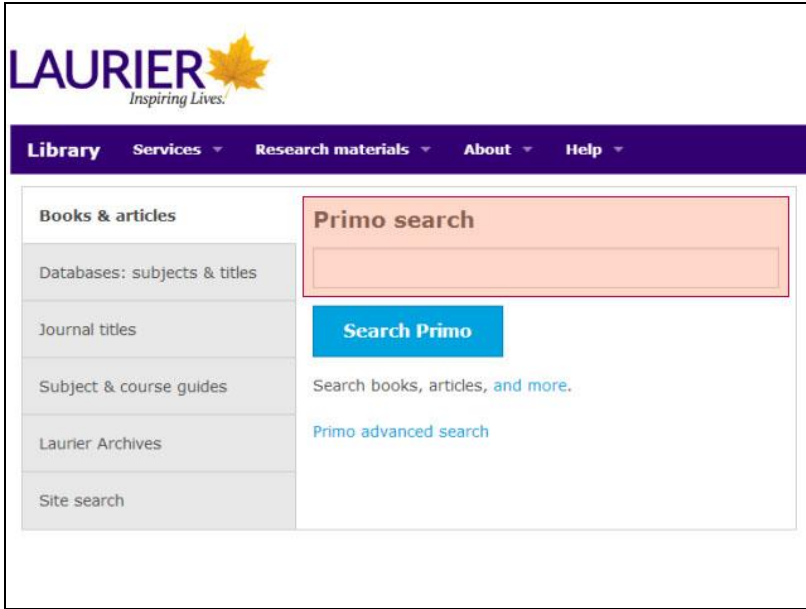
Basically I would conduct my own research study using the news articles as my research data.

After that, though, I would still need to use several scholarly sources to support my arguments.

Scholarly sources should be the foundation of your assignment in nearly all cases, so make sure you use them.

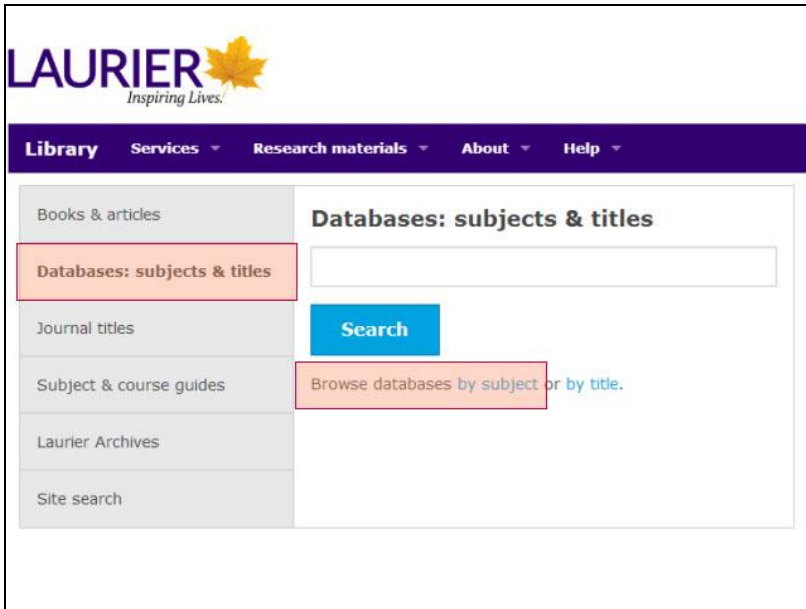
## Using Good Sources: Evaluating What You Find

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One way to do this is to search for information using the Library's web site.

You can search for scholarly information in Primo, the Library's catalogue, from the library's main web site.



Or, you can use the Library's specialized databases on different subjects.

These can be found under the Databases link on the main page.

Click on By Subject to find a list.



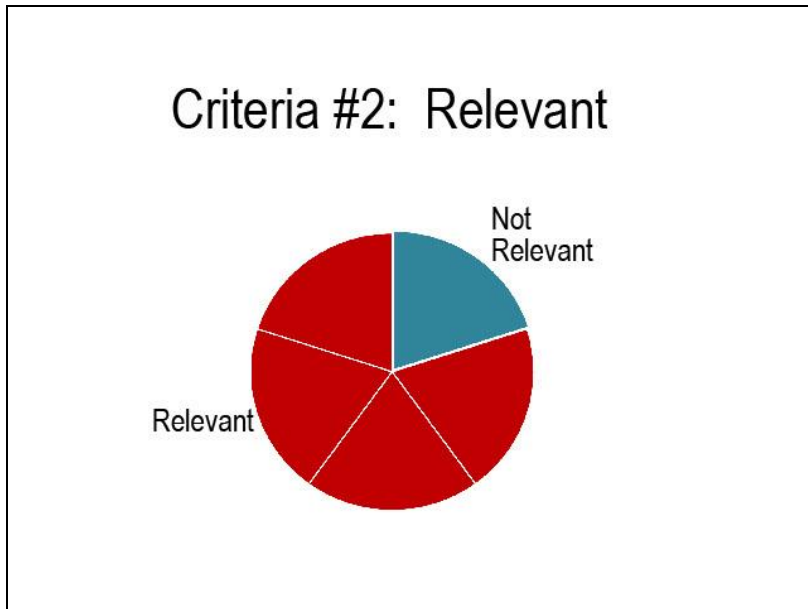
## Using Good Sources: Evaluating What You Find

The screenshot shows the EBSCOhost Advanced Search interface. The search criteria are: "female" AND "athletes" AND "media". The search options include "Boolean/Phrase" (selected), "Find all my search terms", "Find any of my search terms", and "SmartText Searching". The "Limit your results" section includes "Linked Full Text" (unchecked), "Publication Name" (empty), "Peer Reviewed" (checked), "Published Date" (Month and Year dropdowns), "English Abstract Available" (unchecked), and "Language" (All, English, French, German dropdown).

You'll still need to be sure you limit to only scholarly or peer-reviewed articles.

Primo and all databases have this option.

Look for a "peer-reviewed" check box on the main search page, or look at the options to limit or filter your results once you do your search.

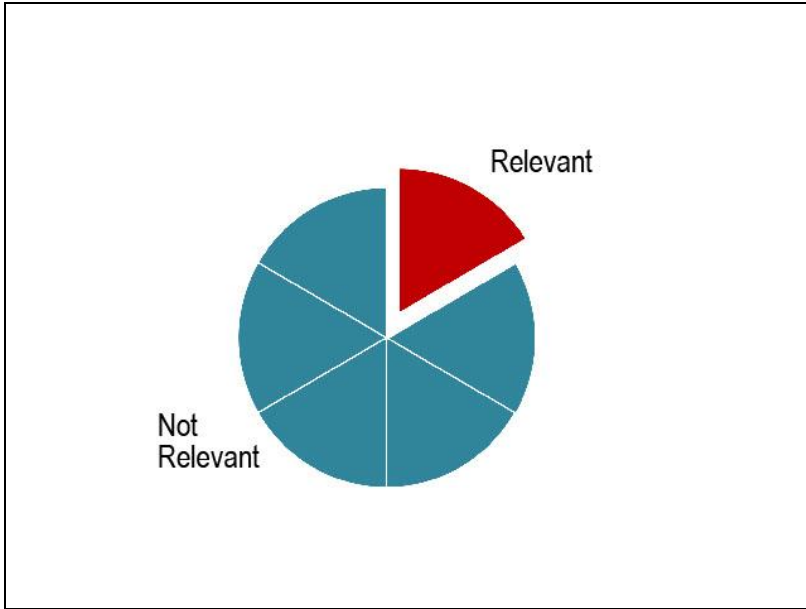


The second main criteria for evaluating your sources is relevance.

You need to make sure your sources are relevant to your topic.

This sounds easy, but is actually tricky.

Most people just look for whatever they can find easily on their topic, assuming that most of what is out there on the topic is relevant.



In reality, though, only a few of the sources out there on your topic are actually relevant to your paper.  
How can you tell which ones those are?

Ask a question

**Topic:**  
female athletes in the media

**Research question:**  
How are female athletes portrayed in the media?

A large, stylized red question mark icon is positioned to the right of the text, emphasizing the importance of asking a question.

One of the easiest ways is to turn your topic into a question.  
For example, say your topic is female athletes in the media.  
Pose your topic as a question, like How are female athletes portrayed in the media?  
This is called a research question.  
Having a research question helps you focus your research more effectively.

Relevant =

does it help answer  
your question?

When you are looking for sources, you need to find things that help you answer your research question.

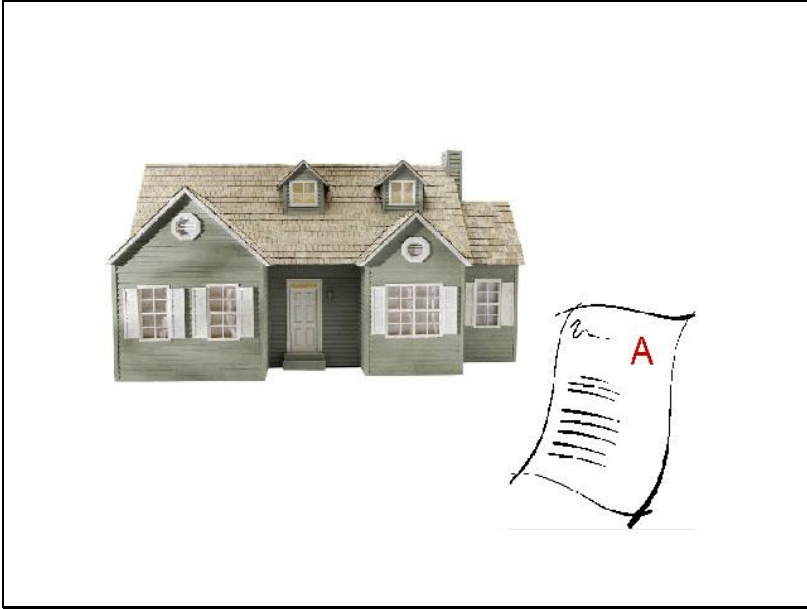
This will help you easily weed out lots of things that might be on your topic, but aren't necessarily helpful for answering the specific question you are researching.

The screenshot shows a search engine interface with the following details:

- Search criteria: female AND athletes AND media
- Database: SPORTDiscus
- Results: 122 Results for...
- Refinement options:  Linked Full Text,  English Abstract Available,  Peer Reviewed, Publication Date range 1975-2011.
- Result 1: "A comparison of body size ideals, body dissatisfaction, and media influence between female track athletes, martial artists, and non-athletes." by Swain, Veen; Steadman, Laura; Tovié, Martin J., Psychology of Sport & Exercise Nov2009, Vol. 10 Issue 6, p609 (English Abstract Available). Subjects: BODY size; BODY image; WOMEN track & field athletes; WOMEN martial artists; MASS media & sports; WOMEN athletes; PSYCHOLOGY; BODY mass index; COMPARATIVE studies. Database: SPORTDiscus. Relevancy: \*\*\*\*\*

When you do a search and get lots of results, this makes it easier to evaluate which ones will be relevant.

Keeping in mind my research question, how are female athletes portrayed in the media, we can see that quite a few of the results are not that helpful in answering the question, even though they are on the topic of female athletes and media.



Focusing your research around a question, and using that question to help identify the relevant sources and the relevant parts of those sources, will help make your research and reading more efficient.

You know what you are looking for, so you will save time when you are searching.

You will also end up with sources that are scholarly and relevant, and which will help build a good foundation for the arguments in your paper.

## Related Videos



[library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials](http://library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials)

For more information on finding sources and evaluating scholarly sources, check out our related videos at [library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials](http://library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials).

Questions?



[library.wlu.ca/help/askus](http://library.wlu.ca/help/askus)



If you have questions, ask us at [library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials](http://library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials).