

Scholarly vs Popular Sources

So your professor told you that you need to use 'scholarly sources' for your research assignment, but what does it mean?

First of all, scholar sources are different from popular sources.

You're probably more familiar with popular sources, like magazines and newspapers. These resources are readily available and can be consumed in quick doses. Scholarly sources, on the other hand, are usually found in specialized publications such as scholarly journals and academic books. They are mostly accessible through libraries and online databases and often contain very specialized information.

How do you identify scholarly sources?

First, you want to look at who wrote it.

Scholarly sources are written by researchers and scholars, so people like professors who are affiliated with academic or research institutions. Popular sources are usually written by journalists and other freelance writers, who may not be specialists in the topics they're writing about.

Scholarly and popular sources also serve different purposes for different types of audience.

Scholarly sources aim to present and share original research with other researchers and scholars, and they often contain technical jargon and specialized vocabulary. Popular sources, in contrast, are usually written to inform, entertain or persuade the general public, so they tend to use everyday language accessible to all types of readers.

The use of references is another way you can differentiate scholarly sources from popular sources.

Scholarly sources are usually connected to other scholarly work, so it's essential that the authors document the resources they used in their own research. Popular sources don't usually include a list of references, even if they might refer to the resources they used indirectly.

Although it's not always black and white, these are some good tips to keep in mind when you're looking for scholarly sources. And if you're still not sure, you can always check with your professor!