

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Research Resources

Scholarly resources are typically divided into three types of sources:

- Primary resources, which are first-hand accounts
- Secondary resources, which offer interpretations, critiques, analyses, and/or commentaries
- Tertiary resources, which offer brief summaries or distillations of a topic

These resources—and the terms used to identify them—may differ from one discipline to another. Here are examples of sources used in Social Science, Engineering, and Medicine:

Primary Sources: Examples

Social Sciences	Engineering	Medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspapers • Government Information • Archival Materials • Statistical data • Interviews • Photographs • Diaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journals • Lab notes • Patents • Programming code and algorithms • Technical reports • Scientific experiments • Conference proceedings and meeting notes • Dissertations and thesis • Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical trials • Scientific experiments • Raw research data • Medical reports • Conference proceedings and meeting notes • Infographics

Secondary Sources: Examples

Social Sciences	Engineering	Medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal articles that offer a critical analysis of the sources mentioned above Biographies Commentaries Editorials Literary criticism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal articles that offer a critical analysis of the sources mentioned above Monographs Reviews Textbooks Treatises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal articles that offer a critical analysis of the sources mentioned above Review article Practice guidelines Systematic reviews Books analyzing results of original research Histories

Tertiary Sources: Examples

Social Sciences	Engineering	Medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encyclopedias Bibliographies Abstracts Book reviews Literature reviews Indexes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Databases (Engineering Village, Web of Science) Compilations Handbooks Encyclopedias Tables Dictionaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encyclopedias Almanacs Facts books Manuals Guidebooks Directories