Scholarly vs. Popular Articles: What is the Difference?

For many assignments at UCLA, you will be asked to find and cite scholarly articles (also known as “peer-reviewed” or “academic” or “refereed” or “scientific” articles.) While the exact definition of a scholarly article varies according to discipline, here are some attributes to look for:

**Scholarly:**
- Author is an expert in the field (professor, researcher, doctor) and credentials are stated
- Multiple authors for one article is common
- Longer length
- Peer-reviewed
- Citations/Footnotes/References
- Data/graphs/tables
- Presents new research
- Methodology is stated
- Audience: other scholars/experts in the field
- Technical language
- Abstract at beginning of article
- Have to pay to access it (generally)

**Popular:**
- Written by a journalist
- Shorter length
- Everyday language
- Glossy, color pages
- Lots of photographs
- Audience: general public
- Freely available on the web (generally)

**Examples of Titles:**
- *Journal of Neurophysiology*
- *Journal of Neuroscience Research*
- *Developmental Brain Research*
- *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*
- *Gender & History*
- *Comparative Literature Studies*
- *American Sociologist*
- *Philosophy of Science*
- *Philosophical Studies*
- *Law, Innovation, & Technology*

**Examples of Titles:**
- *Time*
- *The Economist*
- *Scientific American*
- *National Geographic*
- *The New Yorker*
- *The Atlantic*
- *Wall Street Journal*
- *Los Angeles Times*
- *Wired*
- *People*
# Primary and Secondary Sources

## Humanities

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<tr>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original, first-hand document created during a particular event or time:</td>
<td>Created after an event has occurred and uses the primary source as the subject of an analysis, commentary, or review.</td>
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**Examples include:**

- Photographs, paintings
- Videos
- Government documents
- Diaries or journals
- Speeches

Primary sources can also be created after an event in the form of interviews, memoires, and autobiographies of persons who witnessed or lived through a particular time.

**Examples include:**

- Textbooks
- Biographies
- Documentaries
- Reviews or critiques

A secondary source may give context to a primary source, explaining its relevance or use during an event, or may include primary sources such as a video or interview included in a documentary.

## Sciences

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<td>An original document created for the purpose of research. These documents will always present new information.</td>
<td>A secondary source reviews, comments, and will always cite primary sources. New information is not usually found in these sources.</td>
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**Examples include:**

- Data from original research studies
- Clinical trials
- Articles or conference proceedings detailing the authors’ research process and results

**Examples include:**

- Literature reviews
- Textbooks
- Popular magazines

Keywords for identifying primary sources in science literature: *Methodology, results, findings.*

Keywords for identifying secondary sources in science literature: *Review, meta-analysis, commentary, summarize.*

## Questions to ask when determining if a scientific source is primary or secondary

- Are the authors presenting a study and findings which they conducted themselves?
- What type of publication is the source found in?
- Tip: Some databases will label the type of document, e.g. review, case study, book chapter, etc.