Distinguishing Sources by Type

The primary sources you use as a graduate student should be scholarly (peer-reviewed) sources. Sometimes, however, it is hard to know if a source is peer-reviewed. Although the *Harvard Business Review* is a well-respected business publication, it is not an academic journal but, rather, a trade magazine. You can determine the status of a publication by accessing the UoR Library. Type in the name of the publication in the "search" field, and review the information about the publication to determine what kind of source it is. If you do not recognize the journal, it may be wise to check it against the extensive [Beall's List of Predatory Journals and Publishers](#).

Internet sources are frequently challenging to evaluate because they aren't always transparent about their purpose. Be wary of commercial websites that publish information that reflects the beliefs and values of a business owner or an advocacy group whose intentions might be called into question. These documents *may* contain useful information, but oftentimes they are suspect because their intent is not to educate, but to sell an organization's products, services or philosophies. For example, a commercial website offering leadership consulting services might not be a credible source for information on leadership practices because the website is concerned with selling consulting services and could very likely slant information to attract potential clients. A group advocating for the legalization of marijuana might not offer a well-balanced perspective of the potential benefits and harms of the drug. *Think carefully about the source of information before you before you reference anything from the Internet*.

Internet videos are a good example of a type of resource that may be quite useful and appropriate for learning more about a topic. However, because they are not peer-reviewed, videos are *not* acceptable academic sources for *most* written assignments. Likewise, commercial video, movie, television and other media productions may contain interesting information, but they are *not* acceptable academic sources for *most* written assignments.

If you have a question about the acceptability of a particular source for use in an assignment, please contact your instructor for clarification. Use the information below to distinguish between various types of sources.

Scholarly Journals	Professional or Trade Journals	Institutional, Organizational and Governmental Sources	Popular Press	Internet Websites
Objective is to present academic theory and research. *Primary source for peer-reviewed works and should be the foundation for doctoral research.*	Objective is to highlight practitioner research and industry news. *Usually contains practical, pragmatic and potentially valuable information about a topic and has been reviewed by an editor. May be entirely appropriate for incorporation into scholarly works but should NOT substitute for information from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals.*	Objective is to convey information about the mission of the institution, organization or government agency. *Most information found on institutional, organizational and governmental websites is entirely appropriate for incorporation into scholarly works but should complement—not substitute for—information from scholarly journals.*	Objective is to inform and entertain a general audience. *Information from the popular press, such as newspapers or magazines, may inform your understanding of a topic and provide some historical context, but should be used cautiously because the validity of information from these sources cannot always be verified.*	Objective is to communicate organizational information, sell a commercial product/ service, or entertain. *Information from commercial and/or entertainment websites should be avoided since such information typically cannot be independently verified.*
Written for researchers, scholars and master's and doctoral students.	Written for members of different industries.	Written for scholars, researchers, business and industry members and/or the general public.	Written for a wide variety of professionals and non-professionals, and/or the general public.	Written for a wide variety of professionals and non-professionals, and/or the general public.

Scholarly Journals	Professional or Trade Publications	Institutional, Organizational and Governmental Sources	Popular Press	Internet Websites
Authors usually comprise researchers, and academicians.	Internal writers and industry professionals compose articles.	Institutional, organizational or governmental scholars, researchers or staff typically write reports.	Internal staff or freelance authors write articles.	Authors tend to be internal sources, anonymous contributors, or named sources with or without academic credentials
Contain citations and references to support assertions.	Some articles contain citations and references depending on content.	Contain citations and references to support assertions.	Articles do not contain citations and references.	Frequently articles and web-based reports do not contain citations and references.
Articles are generally text based with few or no images.	Articles may contain images and graphics to support text material.	Articles/reports may include graphs, images, or charts or pictures, if they are intended to appeal to a broader general population.	Articles have an attractive and glossy appearance to attract a general audience.	Articles may have a slick and attractive appearance, and may contain pop-up ads, graphics, and/or links to other sources.
Publications usually do not contain advertisements.	Publications may contain ads and promotions.	Articles/reports typically do not contain advertisements, but may acknowledge a sponsoring organization.	Frequently contain ads and promotions.	Frequently contain advertisements.
Panel or board reviews articles for acceptance.	Articles are not peer-reviewed.	Most, but not all, statistics, articles and reports from institutions and government agencies are subjected to a stringent review and editing process before they are published.	Articles are not peer-reviewed.	Rarely peer-reviewed.

Examples

Scholarly Journals	Professional or Trade Publications	Institutional, Organizational and Governmental Sources	Popular Press	Internet Websites
- *Journal of Management* - *Behavior Analysis: Research and Practice* - *PLoS One* - *Academy of Management Journal* - *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*	- *Psychology Today* - *Customer Relation Management* - *Harvard Business Review* - *T+D*	- The National Institutes on Drug Abuse - Autism Research Institute - Supreme Court of the U. S. - Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching - American Psychological Association	- *Fortune* - *The New York Times* - *The Washington Post* - *The Economist* - *People* - *National Geographic*	- YouTube Videos - Blogs and Wikis - Company Websites