

INFORMATION SOURCES: Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Sources, and Gray literature

Primary source: Original manuscript, documents or records used in preparing a published or unpublished work.

Secondary source: A published or unpublished work that relies on primary source(s).

Tertiary source: A published or unpublished work that is based on secondary sources.

Gray (=grey) literature: Source material(s) not available through the usual systems of publication (e.g. books or periodicals) and distribution.

** Certain disciplines may use different criteria for identifying Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary literature. Check with your professor for help specific to your discipline.*

	Primary Sources	Secondary Sources	Tertiary Sources	Gray Literature
Type of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autobiography • Case studies • Correspondence • Diaries/ Personal papers • Dissertations/Theses <p>(Be sure to distinguish between original and review material in the text)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Films: Original dramatic / artistic productions • First-person accounts • Historical documents <p>(Constitution, treaties... & copies of...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laboratory data • Minutes of meetings • Original manuscripts / documents • Original research • Photographs • Religious documents (Bible, scripture...) • Speeches • Technical reports • Works of fiction, poetry, drama... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis • Biography • Criticism • Dissertations/Theses (Literature review materials) • Editorials • Film documentaries • Reviews of the literature • Work that relies on <u>primary sources</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film documentaries • Work that is based entirely on secondary sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference proceedings • Data exchange • Dissertations / Theses • Environmental impact statements • Government documents / publications • Market research reports • Online documents • Oral presentations • Technical reports • Working papers
Author	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors reporting on personal experiences/work. • In academics or research, often written by an expert or graduate student in the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author has an interest in the topic. • Can be an expert in the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author has an interest in the topic. • Free-lance writers • Staff writer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author works in the field • Expert in the field. • Masters or PhD candidates <p>(Continued on back)</p>

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	Primary Sources	Secondary Sources	Tertiary Sources	Gray Literature
Where published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books • Gray literature • Monograph • Scholarly journal • Refereed/peer reviewed journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books • Encyclopedias • Gray literature • Newspapers • Pamphlets • Scholarly journal • Refereed/peer reviewed journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books / textbooks • Gray literature • Magazines • Newspapers • Trade journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business / Industry publications • Government publications (Federal, state & local) • Unpublished dissertation / Theses
Where Found	<p>Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Literature can be found in a variety print sources and electronic databases.</p>			<p>Gray literature is also found in a variety of print sources and electronic databases, though sometimes can be harder to locate.</p> <p>Some examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caloosahatchee Documents • Charlotte Harbor Info. • Dissertation Abstracts • GrayLIT Network http://www.osti.gov/graylit/ • Library of Congress loc.gov • National Sea Grant Lib http://nsgd.gso.uri.edu/ • NCJRS ncjrs.org/ • NOAA noaa.gov • NTIS ntis.gov • PapersFirst database • Proceedings • Scientific & Technical Information Network http://stinet.dtic.mil/ • US Census Bureau census.gov • USDA usda.gov • USGS usgs.gov

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