

How to Find Sources

Now that you have a research question, you need to do some research. This document tells you what types of sources are appropriate, and how to find them.

What types of sources are appropriate

Your term paper must be based on serious scholarly sources. Encyclopedia articles and similar web reviews are not appropriate references, although they can be helpful in getting acquainted with a topic. Appropriate sources can include professional books, articles in professional journals, and serious trade books and articles so long as these demonstrate good scholarship. One way to recognize good scholarship is to check the credentials of the author. Is the author an expert in the field?

How to find scholarly sources: databases and more

There are various ways of finding sources, including starting with references in something you have (like the text) and looking at the references cited in those works, etc. But the main way is to do a search using an online database. Use the first two below, and pubmed also if your topic is health-related:

(1) <http://scholar.google.com> (not the regular google search!). This is publicly-available. Do the following to get the full-text source from Marriott, even when there is not a free full-text link:

1. click “settings” on the google scholar homepage
2. click “library links” (at the far left)
3. type “university of utah” in the box
4. click the appropriate box and save.

Google scholar will then show “get it at UofU” for most articles even if the pdf is not publicly available. Click on that, sign in with your unid, and you will see the article link without further searching.

(2) **psycinfo**, available free to you via Marriott. From the library home page (www.lib.utah.edu) click on the “research databases” tab. For psycinfo, click on the P and scroll down until you see PsycInfo. Other useful databases (depending on topic) are Biosis (for biological articles) and Scopus (everything in science).

(You can log on from home – see the the instructions for “off-campus access”).

(3) **Pubmed (public access to medline)**: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez> is publicly-available and excellent for health-related topics.

(4) The main search bar on Marriott is not a good way to find articles. It can be useful for finding books if you use the “advanced search” function.

(5) With some databases you can also see who has cited the article, and get those articles too (in google scholar, click “cited by xxx”). This will get you more recent sources.

With all these databases, you enter a search term that describes what you want to know. Doing this successfully is an art; too general a search term will get you hundreds of articles; too specific a search term will get you nothing. You may need to try several different versions of the same word (“gender” as well as “sex” for example).

If you have trouble, ask a librarian for help. Marie Paiva works with our department and she is wonderful—ask for her and if she has time to help you, she will.