

# SCHOLARLY VERSUS NON-SCHOLARLY SOURCES

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In college, while doing research, you must learn to distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly sources. Scholarly sources are appropriate for use in your research paper; non-scholarly sources generally are not.

## WHAT ARE SCHOLARLY SOURCES?

Scholarly sources are defined as sources strongly based in research by psychologists, educators, scholars, and other specialists, who adhere to strict standards of conduct and publishing guidelines.

- A scholarly, peer-reviewed/refereed publication undergoes extensive editing and review, often by experts and editors. Generally, scholarly publications list the people who reviewed the materials.
- Authors (whether individuals or organizations) are always listed.
- Scholarly publishers include university presses and scholarly associations.
- The intended audience of a scholarly publication is experts in the field, or student researchers.
- Scholarly articles include lists of references, either at the end of the work or in footnotes, and sometimes bibliographies.
- Regardless of how scholarly an article is, if it is not relevant to your source, it should not be used.
- Scholarly articles are generally well-written and well-edited, with no mistakes in spelling or grammar.
- Recently published works are generally preferred in medical and scientific writing. In terms of some humanities disciplines, including literature, the timeliness/how recently the article was written may have no relevance on whether it is a good source.

## WHAT ARE NON-SCHOLARLY SOURCES?

Non-scholarly sources are defined as sources which are speculative, subjective, or biased, that may be strongly believed by their creators, but which lack support, or may exist strictly for entertainment purposes.

- A non-scholarly publication may undergo peer review, which is not necessarily carried out by scholars. For example, Wikipedia articles are peer-reviewed by other users of the site, but those users are not necessarily scholarly; an essay you write for class may be reviewed by a fellow classmate, but that classmate is not considered a scholar.
- Non-scholarly sources are generally written by non-experts or organizations with a stated or unstated bias.
- Non-scholarly publications are produced by commercial publishers, vanity presses, or other types of publishers.
- The intended audience of a non-scholarly publication is non-experts.
- Non-scholarly publications either do not include bibliographies or lists of works cited, or such lists are very short.
- Non-scholarly articles may also include badly-written articles which contain mistakes in spelling or grammar.