Do you have an assignment that calls for some primary and secondary sources?

Do you need some help distinguishing between the two?

This tutorial will help you tell the difference between primary and secondary sources.

You'll learn about their characteristics. You'll see some examples of each, and you'll learn about how and when to use primary and secondary sources.

Why do you think knowing the difference between popular and scholarly sources might be important?

My instructor thinks it is important. – Probably, but why else? Try again.

It will help me to gather information and contribute to communication. -- Yes! Understanding sources will help you to effectively research and communicate. It should make your life easier!

Click next arrow to continue.

It's only important for this class. -- Come on, now! This will help you in most classes, and understanding information sources can help you to make informed decisions in your life outside of school too.

Try again.
Click on one of the two source types to explore its characteristics.

After you've viewed both source types, click on the button at the bottom of the page to go on to the next section.

**SLIDE 5 PRIMARY SOURCES DEFINED**

Let me tell you about some of the characteristics of primary sources.

They are first-hand accounts or individual representations.

Primary sources are created by those who have directly witnessed what they are describing.

They are original documents and usually don’t describe or analyze other documents.

Primary sources may be published or unpublished works.

**SLIDE 6 PRIMARY SOURCE EXAMPLES**

Click on the areas of study to see some applicable primary source examples.

**General:** letters, diaries, speeches, interviews

**History:** transcript of speech given by Queen Elizabeth I; newsreel footage of World War II

**Literature:** Miguel de Cervantes' novel, *Don Quixote*; Franz Kafka's short story, *The Metamorphosis*

**Art:** Michelangelo's sculpture, *David*; Pablo Picasso's painting, *Three Musicians*

**Social Sciences:** interview transcripts of mentally ill patients; raw, analyzed population data

**Natural Sciences:** analyzed results from biological study; analyzed field data collected by environmental org.

**SLIDE 7 WHEN SHOULD I USE PRIMARY SOURCES?**

How can primary sources be used?

Primary sources can be viewed as the focal point of a discussion.

Use primary sources when you want to make claims or criticisms.
Use them as evidence for theories.

Use them to gain timely perspectives on a topic.

**SLIDE 8 SECONDARY SOURCES DEFINED**

Let me tell you about some of the characteristics of secondary sources.

Secondary sources interpret and/or analyze primary sources.

These sources are a step removed from what they are describing.

Usually, secondary sources are published works.

**SLIDE 9 SECONDARY SOURCE EXAMPLES**

Click on the areas of study to see some applicable secondary source examples.

General: textbooks, encyclopedias, analysis, reviews

History: article analyzing Queen Elizabeth I’s speech; book recounting battle history of World War II

Literature: article that examines Cervantes’ writing style; paper discussing motifs in *The Metamorphosis*

Art: Lecture given about Michelangelo’s techniques; Criticism or review of Picasso’s painting

Social Sciences: article analyzing results of mental illness study; book that discusses population trends over time

Natural Sciences: synthesis of study results into a biological theory; article on the environmental impact of pollution

**SLIDE 10 WHEN SHOULD I USE SECONDARY SOURCES?**

What can secondary sources be used for?

You can view secondary sources as part of a conversation about a topic.

Use secondary sources to see what others have discussed.

They can be a good place to gather background information on a topic.

You can also use secondary sources to explore what subtopics have already been explored on a given topic.
SLIDE 11 RELATIVE NATURE

A source's classification as primary or secondary can change depending on the topic that you're studying.

For example, if you're writing about how news is represented on the internet, a news site like cnn.com could be considered a primary source.

You're studying news on the internet, and cnn.com represents the object that you're studying.

However, if you're writing about political elections, and you find an article on cnn.com that analyzes them, the article would be considered a secondary source.

Since you're studying elections, an article on cnn.com is a step removed from your topic.

SLIDE 12 QUIZ

Ok, now it's your turn to try!

Drag and drop to match the appropriate source from the right column with the scenario and source requirement from the left column.

Primary source for paper on Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*
*Hamlet* by Shakespeare

Secondary source for paper on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
Article titled "Hamlet's dramatic arras" by Rebecca Olson

Primary source for paper about Oregon salmon populations
Raw, unanalyzed numeric data containing Oregon salmon counts from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Secondary source for paper about Oregon salmon populations
Article titled "Estimating the size of historical Oregon salmon runs" by Chad Meengs and Robert Lackey

Primary source for paper about web communication
Transcripts of published blogs

Secondary source for paper about web communication
Article titled "Communication in the 21st Century: The Blog" by Mark Kellen

SLIDE 13 REVIEW
A primary source for a paper about Shakespeare's play, Hamlet would be the actual play, Hamlet. This is the object that the paper is studying.

A secondary source for this paper might be another article that analyzes and/or studies the play.

A primary source for a paper about Oregon salmon populations would be raw, unanalyzed numeric data collected by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Remember, in order for this information to count as a primary source, the data must be unanalyzed and in numeric form only.

A secondary source for this paper might be an article that analyzes or describes salmon populations in Oregon.

A primary source for a paper about web communication might be blog transcripts published on the web. The transcripts of the blogs represent the object that you're studying.

A secondary source for that paper might be another article that analyzes web communication.

**SLIDE 14 QUESTIONS?**

Have more questions about primary and secondary sources?

Contact a librarian! They can help you with these questions.

Check out your library's website for hours and contact info.