

# WHAT'S HARD ABOUT FINDING GOOD SOURCES?

(AND HOW TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES)

## SCHOLARLY SOURCES

You're having trouble knowing if your sources are scholarly, look to see if the source has been peer reviewed. In EagleSearch, you can filter your search to only include peer reviewed sources. Peer reviewed means that other experts in that field have read the research and attest to its accuracy.

## SOURCES AREN'T SUBSTANCIAL

The source looks good on the outside, but when you start digging into it, you realize it reads more like an overview, neglecting to contribute anything to your research. Rather than clicking the x, scan the works cited page to see if any of those sources might have useful information. You might also search to see if the author of the article has written any more related research or look at similar word searches as the one that led you to unsubstantial article. Odds are, you're searching for the right things. Maybe you just need to tweak your word searches slightly.

## KNOWING WHICH KEY WORDS TO USE IN YOUR SEARCH

If you're not sure how to choose the best words to search with, think about the main overarching things you're looking for and narrow your search from there. This might take some trial and error. You might start by searching more broadly if you're still searching for ideas to write about and add or change key words as you need to in order to narrow your search to find more relevant sources as your paper topic narrows. Or if you know more specifically what you want to write about, you might start narrow and broaden your search as needed.

## PAYWALLS

Never pay for a source. Request the article, book, book chapter, etc. through InterLibraryLoan. To do this, go to EagleSearch and find the source. Then submit a request for the source if you can't access it through the library. You should receive digital media within 24 hours and physical media within 4 days.



## **LOOKS LIKE A GOOD ARTICLE BUT IT'S OPINION BASED**

Depending on the kind of research you're doing, opinion writing might not make this source useless. You might use the article to recognize biases in research if it fits the assignment. You could also utilize the unopinionated sections in your research or check the works cited page to see if you can find related (unopinionated) research.

## **CONTRADICTIONARY SOURCES**


You can use contradictory source to challenge your thinking and strengthen your argument. You might acknowledge the source in your research paper and counter the claims made in the source. By acknowledging counterclaims, you build important ethos with your reader because they can see that you thought about the topic from multiple angles and took the time to understand multiple sides of the issue.

## **IT'S TOO SPECIFIC, OR THERE'S NO INFORMATION VARIETY IN SOURCES**

Sometimes sources are way too narrow for our purposes, or we find the same information over and over again and have trouble finding variety in information. Using synonyms for key words in your searches might help you find different articles. ie: college, university, higher-ed. Or maybe you need to use less words in your search to broaden the results of your search. You might also try searching on a different database or on Google Scholar rather than EagleSearch to see if you can find variety that way.

## **NARROWING SEARCH RESULTS**

All the sources you're finding are too old, the wrong type of source, or wrong topics keep showing up in your search results... In EagleSearch, you can filter your results by availability, publication date, content type, subject, language, or journal type. If this doesn't narrow down your results enough, try the advanced search to specify your results further.



## CREDIBILITY

The source you've found might not be scholarly, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's not credible. Popular sources can still be trusted if they are credible.

Look for sources that have been fact checked. Often .org or .gov websites fit this criteria. The New York Times, Times, and newspapers are also likely credible.

Check if the source has a works cited page and read the author bio to determine if a popular source is credible.

## TOO MANY RESULTS HIDING THE GOOD SOURCES

If there's a bunch of riff raff hiding all of the good sources, you can try filtering the search to narrow the search results. You might also try searching with more specific key words. To ensure all of your key words are in the titles of the articles that you're searching for, use the "and" feature in the advanced search.

## TTU LIBRARY WEBSITE

Find EagleSearch, databases, and journals on the TTU library website:

<https://www.tntech.edu/library/index.php>

## WEST

For help navigating the difficulties of finding sources, consider making an appointment us at the TTU writing center:

<https://www.tntech.edu/cas/english/west.php>

## BIAS

If you have a source, but you're unsure whether its biased information or not, think about the following questions:

- Is there biased or loaded language throughout the article?
- Does the author make bold claims and assert their opinion with insufficient research backing their claims?
- Are they appealing to your emotions rather than logic through reasoning and data?
- Is their logic reasonable, believable, neutral, and completely thought through?
- Does the author have a good reputation?
- Do they have a history with researching this subject; are they knowledgeable?
- Was the author paid to perform the research, do they have divided interests, or some sort of motivation to desire certain results in the research?
- Is the author a primary source with first-hand experience or a secondary source repeating information in a potentially misunderstood or skewed way?

Resource brought to you by  
the Writing Excellence Studio  
@ Tech

