

# Primary and Secondary Information Sources

## Introduction

In the course of researching a University assignment you will probably come across a range of information sources such as textbooks, journal articles, reports, YouTube videos and documentaries, to give just a few examples. Some of these sources will be **primary** sources of information and others examples of **secondary** information sources. In this guide, we will look at examples of each, explain their characteristics and when you should use them in your work.

## Primary Information Sources

Primary sources of information contain **original** data. The data will have been collected by the researcher / author of the information using research methods such as interviews, questionnaires or surveys, observation or experimentation. It is often easy to tell if an information source contains primary data as it will contain phrases such as '**we** surveyed 100 members....' Examples of primary research sources include the following:

Autobiographies

Blog posts

Diaries

Journal articles in which the authors report on their new research and findings

Letters

Personal film footage

## Secondary Information Sources

In Secondary information sources the information or data has been gathered, synthesised and interpreted by the author(s) from existing sources. Secondary sources often analyse primary data obtained by existing research and can provide a useful introduction or overview of a topic. Examples of secondary information sources include the following:

Encyclopaedias

Reports

Government statistics

Textbooks

Journal articles

Websites

Newspaper articles

## Further information

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**[lweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub](http://lweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub)**