Scholarly Sources

Authors: Authors have an advanced degree (PhD, MD, JD, or Master’s).

Language: Articles contain technical language used in the field. Authors show no emotion in their writing.

Audience: Scholars, professors, students, researchers.

Tone: Objective, unemotional tone.

Purpose: To create and further knowledge in a field of study.

Publisher: Published either by universities or credible publishing companies.

Features: Charts, graphs, maps, and tables of statistics. Usually no color or graphics.

Editorial process: Articles go through a rigorous review process by a committee of others in the field (called the “peer review” process).

References: A bibliography (“Works Cited” or list of “References”) is always provided to document research and sources.

Reliable Sources

Authors: Advanced degree is preferable but not always necessary. Authors should have good journalistic experience or have work experience and expertise in a field.

Language: Written for a wide audience so the vocabulary is often simplified.

Audience: General public

Tone: Avoid sources with an emotional tone or overt bias (such as Fox News or MSNBC news).

Purpose: Depends on the source. Sometimes reporting; sometimes making persuasive arguments.

Publisher: The publisher should have a good reputation for publishing credible information.

Features: Color and graphics but professional look and design.

Editorial process: Ideally, there is an editor checking for accuracy.

References: May or may not be cited but no one should write “Statistics show...” or “Studies prove...” and not say where they come from.