

# BOOKS OR ARTICLES: WHAT SHOULD I USE?



Created by AB  
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Don't panic when your professor tells you that you need to use scholarly or academic sources in your research papers! These sources are actually quite easy to find. What some people don't realize, however, is that BOTH **books** and **articles** often count as scholarly material. This is naturally exciting and invigorating, but also raises new questions: **when should you use a book over an article, and vice versa? Is there even a difference?**

The short answer is yes, sometimes, for some cases and topics. Sometimes a book is more appropriate for your topic or level of knowledge, and sometimes an article is more appropriate. Below you will find some tips on when a book or article might prove most useful.

Journal Articles	Books
Useful when your topic is...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Specific and focused</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Detail-oriented</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> In a quickly changing field (i.e. technology)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Broad</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on a trend, time period, etc.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> In a field without rapid change (i.e. history)</li></ul>
Useful when you need...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Original research/cases</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Different angles (often achieved by reading multiple articles from different perspectives)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Primary source material</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive or deep coverage</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Background or context</li></ul>

## Remember: Shared Advantages

Both scholarly books and articles have advantages. They contain relevant and well-researched content, they are often written by subject specialists or experts, and they have undergone a review or editing process. If you have further questions about scholarly sources, please consult the "[Identifying and reading scholarly works](#)" handout.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Sometimes your professor will ask for a required or minimum number of sources (e.g. minimum of 3 books and 3 articles). Double-check your assignment outline. Ask if you are unsure.
2. Short doesn't mean less-depth! Articles can go into great coverage of a specific topic or event.
3. Books come in many different forms, such as encyclopedias, case studies, and collections. You don't need to read an entire book cover to cover. Look at the Table of Contents to find relevant chapters, and the Index to find relevant term.
4. This is all highly dependent on your topic, discipline, and argument. Pick what works best for you at the time, and always be willing to explore new options!

