Understanding your sources

Click on the info icons to read more

- Books
- News media
- Journal articles
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Image credit: The University of Newcastle, Australia
Journals (aka periodicals) contain different articles written by different authors and focus on specific topics.

Journals are published at regular intervals, i.e. weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc. - so the information is more current and up-to-date.

Scholarly journals can undergo an intensive process known as peer review. Aim to use these articles in your assessments.
Peer-reviewed journals are high quality, scholarly journals. Peer-review ensures the accuracy and validity of the research.

Articles receive an independent review by a panel of subject experts (i.e. the authors' peers) before selection for publication.

Peer-reviewed articles can be located using the 'Peer reviewed' limit in the Library catalogue and certain databases.
Books

• Libraries select books based on teaching and research needs. Some books may be available online, others in print format only.

• Books can take a while to write and be published, so some information may be out-of-date.

• Books can provide good background information and overall coverage of a topic.
• News items provide commentary and discussion on current events at a local, national or international level.

• Editors select content, often based on commercial motivations and incentives.

• News media can be heavily opinionated and driven by the target audience, so only use news sources that are reliable.
• Web pages and online documents can provide access to information not available elsewhere, e.g. government reports and company information.

• Anyone can create content for the web, so not all information is reliable. Check if web sources are OK for your assessments and use sparingly.

• Search engines can display selective results based on popularity algorithms, rather than by the quality or reliability of the source.