

Continue



Secondary sources examples

Ever wondered how historians piece together the past without being there? They rely on secondary sources, let's uncover what they are and how they shape our understanding!Secondary sources play a crucial role in the research process, providing analysis, interpretation, and summaries of primary data. They help bridge the gap between raw evidence and meaningful conclusions, making complex information accessible. Whether you're analyzing historical events, exploring scientific advancements, or building an academic argument, secondary sources are indispensable.This guide dives deep into the world of secondary sources; what they are, how they differ from primary sources, and why they matter. We'll explore their types, real-world examples, and strategies for identifying and evaluating them effectively. By the end, you'll know how to leverage secondary sources for impactful, credible research.Understanding Secondary SourcesSecondary sources are materials that interpret, analyze, or summarize information from primary sources, bridging the gap between raw data and informed insights. Unlike primary sources, which provide direct evidence or firsthand accounts, secondary sources offer a layer of interpretation and context, making them invaluable in academic research and writing.For instance, while a diary entry from a historical figure is a primary source, a biography analyzing the diary and its historical significance qualifies as a secondary source. Similarly, in science, a research paper that reviews multiple experimental studies to draw broader conclusions is a secondary source.Secondary sources are often authored by scholars, researchers, or professionals who synthesize existing knowledge to provide deeper understanding or critique. They are distinct from tertiary sources, such as encyclopedias or textbooks, which serve as general overviews rather than detailed analyses.Types of Secondary SourcesSecondary sources come in diverse forms, each tailored to specific academic and research needs. Here's a breakdown:Books and TextbooksBooks and textbooks are some of the most widely used secondary sources. Textbooks provide structured overviews of topics, often used in educational settings, while books offer a deeper dive into specialized subjects.For instance, a textbook on environmental science might summarize core principles, while a book like *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson interprets primary data to address environmental concerns.Journal Articles and ReviewsJournal articles, especially review articles, are cornerstones of academic research. These articles synthesize findings from primary research, offering critical analyses and identifying gaps for future exploration.For example, a review article in medical science might analyze 20 different studies to conclude the effectiveness of a new treatment for diabetes.Biographies and DocumentariesBiographies and documentaries interpret primary data to tell compelling stories. These sources are particularly valuable in fields like history, sociology, or media studies.Examples include:A biography on Albert Einstein, which pieces together letters and scientific papers to narrate his journey.A documentary on World War II that combines archival footage, interviews, and expert analysis to contextualize events.Encyclopedias and DictionariesEncyclopedias and dictionaries typically serve as tertiary sources, but they can function as secondary sources when they analyze or summarize complex topics.For instance, an encyclopedia entry on "Quantum Mechanics" might interpret foundational principles and summarize their historical evolution.Examples of Secondary SourcesSecondary sources take many forms, each serving a specific purpose in research. Let's explore some common types:Academic Journal ArticlesAcademic journal articles are essential for researchers, particularly for conducting literature reviews or exploring meta-analyses. They synthesize findings from primary studies and often identify trends, gaps, or patterns in a specific field.For example, a meta-analysis of multiple clinical trials on cancer treatment provides a comprehensive evaluation of their collective outcomes, making it an indispensable secondary source for medical professionals.Books and AnthologiesBooks and anthologies compile and interpret primary data, often presenting a nuanced perspective on historical, cultural, or scientific topics.Consider an anthology of essays on climate change, it gathers and interprets data from primary sources like scientific studies, offering a cohesive narrative on the subject.BiographiesBiographies interpret an individual's life through primary materials such as letters, interviews, and archival documents. They aim to provide a thorough analysis of a person's contributions and context.Examples include:The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt by Edmund Morris, which uses letters and speeches to contextualize Roosevelt's life.A biography on Ada Lovelace that interprets her role in the early development of computer science.DocumentariesDocumentaries synthesize data from multiple primary sources, such as interviews, archival footage, and historical documents, to narrate an event or explain a concept.For instance, *13th* by Ava DuVernay uses interviews, data, and archival footage to explore systemic racism and the U.S. prison system, making it a compelling secondary source for sociological studies.News Articles and ReportsNews articles and reports act as secondary sources when they analyze events retrospectively or offer investigative insights rather than immediate reporting.An investigative article about the causes of the 2008 financial crisis, synthesizing interviews and economic data, serves as a strong secondary source for understanding the event's implications.Reviews and CritiquesReviews and critiques evaluate and analyze works such as books, movies, or academic papers. They provide insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and overall impact of the subject.For example, a literary review dissecting the themes and symbolism in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a valuable secondary source for literature students.Conference ProceedingsConference proceedings collect papers and presentations from academic events, offering synthesized insights into primary research across disciplines.For instance, a proceedings document from a climate science conference might summarize findings from multiple studies on renewable energy advancements.Theses and DissertationsTheses and dissertations often analyze or interpret primary research data, offering a detailed examination of specific topics within a field.An example is a PhD dissertation analyzing the impact of social media algorithms on public opinion, which interprets raw data from surveys and user metrics.Importance of Secondary Sources in ResearchSecondary sources are pivotal in shaping research by providing context, supporting arguments, and identifying knowledge gaps. Let's break down their contributions:Context and BackgroundSecondary sources establish the groundwork by explaining the broader context of a topic. For example, a book detailing the Cold War provides insights into the global political climate, helping researchers frame specific events like the Cuban Missile Crisis within their historical context.Supporting ArgumentsThese sources strengthen research by offering evidence and expert opinions. Imagine citing a journal article analyzing the economic impact of World War II to reinforce claims about post-war industrial growth. The inclusion of such interpretations adds depth and credibility to your work.Literature ReviewsSynthesize existing research: Literature reviews summarize past studies, making it easier to understand the current state of a field.Spot patterns: For example, reviews in medical research might highlight trends in effective treatments.Identify consensus and debate: They clarify what is agreed upon and what remains contentious in a field.Understanding Primary SourcesSecondary sources act as a bridge to primary materials. For instance, a biography interpreting Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches makes it easier to analyze his rhetoric and its impact.Diverse PerspectivesA key strength of secondary sources is their ability to present varying viewpoints. For example,A book on climate change from a scientific perspective offers data and predictions.A policy analysis might explore the economic implications of climate initiatives.Using diverse perspectives allows researchers to build balanced and informed arguments.Identifying Research GapsBy reviewing secondary sources, researchers can pinpoint unexplored areas. For instance, a review of renewable energy studies might reveal limited research on its adoption in developing countries, paving the way for new investigations.Developing New IdeasSecondary sources inspire innovation by building on existing research. For example, critiques of urban infrastructure projects might spark ideas for more sustainable and inclusive designs.Guiding Future ResearchHighlight unanswered questions: Many secondary sources explicitly point out areas needing further exploration.Suggest methodologies: A paper on machine learning ethics might recommend specific frameworks for future studies.Identifying and Evaluating Secondary SourcesRecognizing and assessing secondary sources is crucial for credible research. Here are key factors to consider:Author Expertise: Check the author's credentials and affiliation. Are they an expert in the field? Look for academics, researchers, or established professionals.Publication Reputation: Evaluate the source of publication. Peer-reviewed journals, academic publishers, and reputable institutions lend credibility to the material.Citation Accuracy: Review the references provided in the secondary source. Are they well-documented and drawn from reliable primary or secondary materials?By focusing on these factors, you ensure that the secondary sources you use are both credible and relevant to your research.Leveraging Secondary Sources for Effective ResearchSecondary sources play a vital role in research, offering interpretation, context, and analysis that complement primary data. By understanding their definition, types, and importance, researchers can use them to enrich arguments, identify gaps, and explore diverse perspectives. Use secondary sources critically, evaluating their credibility and relevance to ensure your work is well-supported. For efficient research, tools like Jenni AI can help you organize, analyze, and cite secondary sources with ease, streamlining your academic writing process. Secondary research is the analysis, summary or synthesis of already existing published research. Instead of collecting original data, as in primary research, secondary research involves data or the results of data analyses already collected. It is generally published in books, handbooks, textbooks, articles, encyclopedias, websites, magazines, literature reviews and meta-analyses. These are usually referred to as secondary sources. Secondary research is a good place to start when wanting to acquire a broad view of a research area. It is usually easier to understand and may not require advanced training in research design and statistics. Secondary Research Examples A literature review summarizes, reviews, and critiques the existing published literature on a topic. Literature reviews are considered secondary research because it is a collection and analysis of the existing literature rather than generating new data for the study. They hold value for academic studies because they enable us to take stock of the existing knowledge in a field, evaluate it, and identify flaws or gaps in the existing literature. As a result, they're almost universally used by academics prior to conducting primary research. Example 1: Workplace stress in nursing: a literature review Citation: McVicar, A. (2003). Workplace stress in nursing: a literature review. Journal of advanced nursing, 44(6), 633-642 Source: Summary: This study conducted a systematic analysis of literature on the causes of stress for nurses in the workplace. The study explored the literature published between 2000 and 2014. The authors found that the literature identifies several main causes of stress for nurses: professional relationships with doctors and staff, communication difficulties with patients and their families, the stress of emergency cases, overwork, lack of staff, and lack of support from the institutions. They conclude that understanding these stress factors can help improve the healthcare system and make it better for both nurses and patients. Example 2: The impact of shiftwork on health: a literature review Citation: Matheson, A., O'Brien, L., & Reid, J. A. (2014). The impact of shiftwork on health: a literature review. Journal of Clinical Nursing, 23(23-24), 3309-3320. Source: In this literature review, 118 studies were analyzed to examine the impact of shift work on nurses' health. The findings were organized into three main themes: physical health, psychosocial health, and sleep. The majority of shift work research has primarily focused on these themes, but there is a lack of studies that explore the personal experiences of shift workers and how they navigate the effects of shift work on their daily lives. Consequently, it remains challenging to determine how individuals manage their shift work schedules. They found that, while shift work is an inevitable aspect of the nursing profession, there is limited research specifically targeting nurses and the implications for their self-care. Example 3: Social media and entrepreneurship research: A literature review Citation: Olanrewaju, A. S. T., Hossain, M. A., Whiteside, N., & Mercieca, P. (2020). Social media and entrepreneurship research: A literature review. International Journal of Information Management, 50, 90-110. Source: In this literature review, 118 studies were analyzed to examine the impact of shift work on nurses' health. The findings were organized into three main themes: physical health, social health, and sleep. The majority of shift work research has primarily focused on these themes, but there is a lack of studies that explore the personal experiences of shift workers and how they navigate the effects of shift work on their daily lives. Consequently, it remains challenging to determine how individuals manage their shift work schedules. They found that, while shift work is an inevitable aspect of the nursing profession, there is limited research specifically targeting nurses and the implications for their self-care. Example 4: Adoption of electric vehicle: A literature review and prospects for sustainability Citation: Kumar, R. R., & Alok, K. (2020). Adoption of electric vehicle: A literature review and prospects for sustainability. Journal of Cleaner Production, 253, 119911. Source: This study is a literature review that aims to synthesize and integrate findings from existing research on electric vehicles. By reviewing 239 articles from top journals, the study identifies key factors that influence electric vehicle adoption. Themes identified included: availability of charging infrastructure and total cost of ownership. The authors propose that this analysis can provide valuable insights for future improvements in electric mobility. Example 5: Towards an understanding of social media use in the classroom: a literature review Citation: Van den Beemt, A., Thurlings, M., & Willems, M. (2020). Towards an understanding of social media use in the classroom: a literature review. Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 29(1), 35-55. Source: This study examines how social media can be used in education and the challenges teachers face in balancing its potential benefits with potential distractions. The review analyzes 271 research papers. They find that ambiguous results and poor study quality plague the literature. However, they identify several factors affecting the success of social media in the classroom, including: school culture, attitudes towards social media, and learning goals. The study's value is that it organizes findings from a large corpus of existing research to help understand the topic more comprehensively. Meta-analyses are similar to literature reviews, but are at a larger scale and tend to involve the quantitativ synthesis of data from multiple studies to identify trends and derive estimates of overall effect sizes. For example, while a literature review might be a qualitative assessment of trends in the literature, a meta analysis would be a quantitative assessment, using statistical methods, of studies that meet specific inclusion criteria that can be directly compared and contrasted. Often, meta-analysis aim to identify whether the existing data can provide an authoritative account for a hypothesis and whether it's confirmed across the body of literature. Example 6: Cholesterol and Alzheimer's Disease Risk: A Meta-Analysis Citation: Sáiz-Vazquez, O., Puente-Martínez, A., Ubillos-Landa, S., Pacheco-Bonostro, J., & Santabàrbara, J. (2020). Cholesterol and Alzheimer's disease risk: a meta-meta-analysis. Brain sciences, 10(6), 386. Source: This study examines the relationship between cholesterol and Alzheimer's disease (AD). Researchers conducted a systematic search of meta-analyses and reviewed several databases, collecting 100 primary studies and five meta-analyses to analyze the connection between cholesterol and Alzheimer's disease. They find that the literature compellingly demonstrates that low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) levels significantly influence the development of Alzheimer's disease, but high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C), total cholesterol (TC), and triglycerides (TG) levels do not show significant effects. This is an example of secondary research because it compiles and analyzes data from multiple existing studies rather than collecting new, original data. Example 7: The power of feedback revisited: A meta-analysis of educational feedback research Citation: Wisniewski, B., Zierer, K., & Hattie, J. (2020). The power of feedback revisited: A meta-analysis of educational feedback research. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, 3087. Source: This meta-analysis examines 435 empirical studies research on the effects of feedback on student learning. They use a random-effects model to ascertain whether there is a clear effect size across the literature. The authors find that feedback tends to impact cognitive and motor skill outcomes but has less of an effect on motivational and behavioral outcomes. A key (albeit somewhat obvious) finding was that the manner in which the feedback is provided is a key factor in whether the feedback is effective. Example 8: How Much Does Education Improve Intelligence? A Meta-Analysis Citation: Ritchie, S. J., & Tucker-Drob, E. M. (2018). How much does education improve intelligence? A meta-analysis. Psychological science, 29(8), 1358-1369. Source: This study investigates the relationship between years of education and intelligence test scores. The researchers analyzed three types of quasiexperimental studies involving over 600,000 participants to understand if longer education increases intelligence or if more intelligent students simply complete more education. They found that an additional year of education consistently increased cognitive abilities by 1 to 5 IQ points across all broad categories of cognitive ability. The effects persisted throughout the participants' lives, suggesting that education is an effective way to raise intelligence. This study is an example of secondary research because it compiles and analyzes data from multiple existing studies rather than gathering new, original data. Example 9: A meta-analysis of factors related to recycling Citation: Geiger, J. L., Steg, L., Van Der Werff, E., & Unal, A. B. (2019). A meta-analysis of factors related to recycling. Journal of environmental psychology, 64, 78-97. Source: This study aims to identify key factors influencing recycling behavior across different studies. The researchers conducted a random-effects meta-analysis on 91 studies focusing on individual and household recycling. They found that both individual factors (such as recycling self-identity and personal norms) and contextual factors (like having a bin at home and owning a house) impacted recycling behavior. The analysis also revealed that individual and contextual factors better predicted the intention to recycle rather than the actual recycling behavior. The study offers theoretical and practical implications and suggests that future research should examine the effects of contextual factors and the interplay between individual and contextual factors. Example 10: Stress management interventions for police officers and recruits Citation: Patterson, G. T., Chung, I. W., & Swan, P. W. (2014). Stress management interventions for police officers and recruits: A meta-analysis. Journal of experimental criminology, 10, 487-513. Source: The meta-analysis systematically reviews randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental studies that explore the effects of stress management interventions on outcomes among police officers. It looked at 12 primary studies published between 1984 and 2008. Across the studies, there were a total of 906 participants. Interestingly, it found that the interventions were not effective. Here, we can see how secondary research is valuable sometimes for showing there is no clear trend or consensus in existing literature. The conclusions suggest a need for further research to develop and implement more effective interventions addressing specific stressors and using randomized controlled trials. Academic textbooks tend to not present new research. Rather, they present key academic information in ways that are accessible to university students and academics. As a result, we can consider textbooks to be secondary rather than primary research. They're collections of information and research produced by other people, then re-packaged for a specific audience. Textbooks tend to be written by experts in a topic. However, unlike literature reviews and meta-analyses, they are not necessarily systematic in nature and are not designed to progress current knowledge through identifying gaps, weaknesses, and strengths in the existing literature. Example 11: Psychology for the Third Millennium: Integrating Cultural and Neuroscience Perspectives Citation: This textbook aims to bridge the gap between two distinct domains in psychology: Qualitative and Cultural Psychology, which focuses on managing meaning and norms, and Neuropsychology and Neuroscience, which studies brain processes. The authors believe that by combining these areas, a more comprehensive general psychology can be achieved, which unites the biological and cultural aspects of human life. This textbook is considered a secondary source because it synthesizes and integrates information from various primary research studies, theories, and perspectives in the field of psychology. Example 12: Cultural Sociology: An Introduction Citation: Bennett, A., Back, L., Edles, L. D., Gibson, M., Inglis, D., Jacobs, R., & Woodward, I. (2012). Cultural sociology: an introduction. New York: John Wiley & Sons. This student textbook introduces cultural sociology and proposes that it is a valid model for sociological thinking and research. It gathers together existing knowledge within the field to prevent an overview of major sociological themes and empirical approaches utilized within cultural sociological research. It does not present new research, but rather packages existing knowledge in sociology and makes it understandable for undergraduate students. Example 13: A Textbook of Community Nursing Citation: Chilton, S., & Bain, H. (Eds.). (2017). A textbook of community nursing. New York: Routledge. This textbook presents an evidence-based introduction to professional topics in nursing. In other words, it gathers evidence from other research and presents it to students. It covers areas such as care approaches, public health, eHealth, therapeutic relationships, and mental health. Like many textbooks, it brings together its own secondary research with user-friendly elements like exercises, activities, and hypothetical case studies in each chapter. White papers are typically produced within businesses and government departments rather than academic research environments. Generally, a white paper will focus on a specific topic of concern to the institution in order to present a state of the current situation as well as opportunities that could be pursued for change, improvement, or profit generation in the future. Unlike a literature review, a white paper generally doesn't follow standards of academic rigor and may be presented with a bias toward, or focus on, a company or institution's mission and values. Example 14: Future of Mobility White Paper Citation: Shaheen, S., Totte, H., & Stocker, A. (2018). Future of Mobility White Paper. UC Berkeley: Institute of Transportation Studies at UC Berkeley. Source: This white paper explores the how transportation is changing due to concerns over climate change, equity of access to transit, and rapid technological advances (such as shared mobility and automation). The authors aggregate current information and research on key trends, emerging technologies/services, impacts on California's transportation ecosystem, and future growth projections by reviewing state agency publications, peer-reviewed articles, and forecast reports from various sources. This white paper is an example of secondary research because it synthesizes and integrates information from multiple primary research sources, expert interviews, and input from an advisory committee of local and state transportation agencies. Example 15: White Paper Concerning Philosophy of Education and Environment Citation: Humphreys, C., Blenkinsop, S. White Paper Concerning Philosophy of Education and Environment. Stud Philos Educ 36(1): 243-264. Source: This white paper acknowledges the increasing significance of climate change, environmental degradation, and our relationship with nature, and the need for philosophers of education and global citizens to respond. The paper examines five key journals in the philosophy of education to identify the scope and content of current environmental discussions. By organizing and summarizing the located articles, it assesses the possibilities and limitations of these discussions within the philosophy of education community. This white paper is an example of secondary research because it synthesizes and integrates information from multiple primary research sources, specifically articles from the key journals in the field, to analyze the current state of environmental discussions. Students' academic essays tend to present secondary rather than primary research. The student is expected to study current literature on a topic and use it to present a thesis statement. Academic essays tend to require rigorous standards of analysis, critique, and evaluation, but do not require systematic investigation of a topic like you would expect in a literature review. In an essay, a student may identify the most relevant or important data from a field of research in order to demonstrate their knowledge of a field of study. They may also, after demonstrating sufficient knowledge and understanding, present a thesis statement about the issue. Secondary research involves data that has already been collected. The published research might be reviewed, included in a meta-analysis, or subjected to a re-analysis. These findings might be published in a peer-reviewed journal or handbook, become the foundation of a book for public consumption, or presented in a more narrative form for a popular website or magazine. Sources for secondary research can range from scientific journals to government databases and archived data accumulated by research institutes. University students might engage in secondary research to become familiar with an area of research. That might help spark an intriguing hypothesis for a research project of master's thesis. Secondary research can yield new insights into human behavior, or confirm existing conceptualizations of psychological constructs. Secondary sources are works that analyze, interpret, or merely describe historical or scientific events. They're written based on firsthand accounts without being firsthand accounts themselves. Secondary sources draw on the data and experiences from primary sources to reassess the information and draw conclusions by combining them with information from other sources. Because primary sources aren't always accessible to everyone, secondary sources often provide a simpler and consolidated version of the same vital information. Below, we give a more precise definition of secondary sources and explain how to use them in academic writing, along with a list of examples of secondary sources. Grammarly helps you communicate confidently What are secondary sources? Unlike primary sources, which are created by people with firsthand experience in a topic, secondary sources analyze, interpret, and describe the firsthand accounts of other people to make them more accessible or to give context to an event. If a historian translates an ancient Egyptian diary and writes a book about what they discovered, the actual diary is an example of a primary source, and the historian's book is an example of a secondary source. Although primary sources are more reliable and authoritative, secondary sources are just as essential to scientific and educational communities. Not everyone has access to primary sources, and even if they do, they might not be able to make sense of them (for example, if the source is written in a dead language or includes data sets). Secondary sources repackage the primary source's key information in a way that's both easier to understand and capable of mass production to reach more people. Moreover, creators of secondary sources are often specialists themselves, so they're able to add new insights that the reader might not have gotten from analyzing the primary source alone. Secondary sources often combine different reference materials to point out connections and patterns, revealing new discoveries that a single primary source alone wouldn't show. That makes both primary and secondary sources crucial to good research. Secondary source examples What are secondary sources in the pool of all research materials? Here's a quick list of the most common types of secondary sources researchers can use: Books aggregating information on a specific topic Educational textbooks Thesis papers and dissertations Reviews and critiques of artwork Biographies (not autobiographies) Reports collecting data from other studies Nonpersonal essays and editorials Articles that interpret preexisting information, as opposed to breaking news Here's a tip: Use Grammarly's Citation Generator to ensure your essays have flawless citations and no plagiarism when citing thesis papers in MLA, APA, and Chicago. How to find a secondary source One of the main advantages of using secondary sources for research is that they're readily available. It's much easier to borrow or buy a book about Roman architecture than it is to fly to Italy and look at Roman ruins! Secondary sources are abundant, so you can find them in all the popular research hubs, such as libraries, bookstores, news sites, and online databases. Sometimes the problem is they're too abundant, and you're not sure which secondary source on a particular subject to choose. Try finding recommendations from experts, like teachers, or reading reviews online to see which secondary sources are best for your topic. How to evaluate a secondary source In addition to determining whether a source is primary or secondary, you also want to evaluate its reliability. People with biases or hidden agendas can misinterpret data from primary sources for their own self-serving goals, so you have to be careful when choosing your sources. For starters, check the source's bibliography. Most secondary sources list their own sources in a bibliography, whereas primary sources don't need bibliographies because they are the source. The presence of a bibliography is the quickest way to identify a secondary source. Another suggestion is to look at the creator; if they're not directly involved in the events of the topic, it's a secondary source. Regardless of whether the source is primary or secondary, you should still assess whether the creator is trustworthy. Do some digging to see if they have any motives for falsifying or skewing information or misleading their audience. Cross-referencing the information is a good way to test the accuracy of a secondary source. Check to see if the information from the source in question matches what you or other, previously verified sources say. Lastly, there's a lot to be said about where you find your secondary sources. School libraries are usually good about filtering out untrustworthy sources, compared to, say, a random website on page seven of your search results. If you're ever in doubt, check the cited materials in a source's bibliography. How to use a secondary source Though they're not primary sources, secondary sources still need to be cited properly in research papers. Even if you paraphrase a secondary source instead of copying it word for word, you still need to credit it to avoid plagiarism. The way you cite a secondary source depends on the style guide you're using. The three most common style guides for academics are MLA, APA, and Chicago, and each has its own particular rules and requirements for citing just about any kind of source, including PDFs, websites, speeches, and TV shows. Keep in mind that you must cite your sources both in the text and at the end in the bibliography. While all three styles are considered equal, refer to your assignment or course requirements to see which one is preferred. Secondary sources FAQs What are secondary sources? Secondary sources are analyses, interpretations, or descriptions of events or topics taken from firsthand accounts, but they're not firsthand accounts themselves. Secondary sources are contrasted to primary sources, which are created by people directly involved. Where can you find secondary sources? Secondary sources are abundant and can be found in libraries, bookstores, news sites, and online databases. How do you use secondary sources? Just like primary sources, secondary sources need to be cited correctly to avoid plagiarism. The rules for proper citation vary depending on which style guide you're using, typically APA, MLA, or Chicago. What are some examples of secondary sources? The most common examples of secondary sources are books that collect information from various primary sources, including textbooks. Other common examples of secondary sources include biographies (but not autobiographies), art reviews, thesis papers and dissertations, reports that gather data from other studies, and nonpersonal essays.