Dear Murphy Institute Students,

October is here, which means two things: a chill is in the air and midterms are around the corner. Many of you will have exams to prep for or papers to submit. Some of you may even be working on the early stages of a term-paper or project. Regardless of what is due for you, you will all likely be reviewing and taking from a great pool of sources: books, articles, websites, the knowledge of people you know.

This week’s tip will briefly describe the types of sources you will come across and suggest what to use them for.

The 3 Types of Sources

The 3 types of sources you will come across are Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary sources.

Primary Sources: original materials you will directly analyze and interpret

For example: novels, poems, data from experiments & surveys, letters, diaries, paintings, interviews

- A strong paper will have at least one primary source because professors want to see how you understand the material. Make sure you spend most of your time reviewing these sources.

Secondary Sources: books, articles, papers, or reports that analyze and interpret primary sources

For example: Peer-reviewed articles in a scholarly journal, essays written by scholars in the field

- Basically, how other people have interpreted poems, data, etc. A strong paper will also have a few secondary sources to show what other scholars think about a topic.
- This type of source is helpful if you want to find counter-arguments – points of view you disagree with and will respond to

Tertiary Sources: sources that give an overview of information from primary and secondary sources

For example: textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, articles for general audiences

- Even though this is last on the list, these are sources you usually want to look at first
- Tertiary sources are great if you want a broad overview of a topic you are new to—even Wikipedia! They give you context for the primary & secondary sources you will later read
- However: unless your professor is OK with them, avoid using these sources to support your arguments—they can sometimes be too simplified, too shallow, and on occasion inaccurate

If you have questions or want to put this into practice, feel free to contact me! 😊

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1. Visit https://murphy.mywconline.net/
2. Register for an account
3. Log in and select the “Murphy Queens Writing Center” calendar.
4. Choose any of the available white rectangles.
5. Fill out the form with your assignment info.

Sign up to attend the Writing Improvement Workshops, Please RSVP Here.

I look forward to working with you soon!

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