Credible Source Types – GCC Library Workshop

All information flows through an **Information Cycle** related to the time that passes between when an event occurs and when information about the event is shared and published.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication Timing</th>
<th>The day of…</th>
<th>The week of…</th>
<th>The week after…</th>
<th>Months after…</th>
<th>Years after…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Channel</strong></td>
<td>Television, radio, internet</td>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>Scholarly journals</td>
<td>Books &amp; encyclopedias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each source type has its own distinct purpose, audience, authors, and evidence, all related to when and how they are published in the Information Cycle.

Knowing the qualities of each source type can help you understand which sources are more credible (believable) and which sources are most recommended for use in college research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Internet / Social Media** (Including blogs & aggregator sites like HuffPost, BuzzFeed, Vox) | • To collect & share snapshots of the news & current events  
• To entertain  
• To attract new viewers | • Ordinary people  
• Freelance writers  
• Editorial staff | • Personal testimony or photographs  
• Hyperlinks to news sources or scholarly articles  
• Little additional evidence | • Super-short entries; a handful of characters or paragraphs  
• Published immediately as event occurs  
• Use everyday & slang language |
| **News sources** | • To share original reporting on current events  
• To provide basic facts & details to a general audience | • Journalists  
• Freelance writers  
• Editorial staff  
• Undergo fact-checking process | • Quotations from event participants, witnesses, or subject experts | • Shorter articles  
• Published or updated daily  
• Use everyday language |
| **Magazines** | • To share original reporting  
• To entertain & inform on current events  
• To present information to a general audience | • Journalists  
• Freelance writers  
• Editorial staff  
• Undergo fact-checking process | • Interviews with event participants, witnesses, or subject experts  
• Summaries of outside research | • Short-to-medium length articles  
• Published weekly or monthly  
• Use everyday language |
| **Scholarly Journals** | • To share new discoveries & analysis with researchers, scholars, and other experts | • Scholars & experts in a specialized field of study  
• Undergo strict peer-review process that takes months to complete  
• Citations of earlier research  
• Descriptions of original research methods  
• Statistics & charts document original findings | | • Lengthy articles  
• Published quarterly or biannually  
• Use highly specialized language  
• Include long reference lists |
| **Books** | • To provide a lengthy, thorough examination of a topic | • Experts on specialized topics  
• Undergo extensive research, writing & editing process that can take years to complete | • Varies but may include in-depth interviews, analysis of outside research, and/or citations | • 100+ pages long  
• Published one time following years of work  
• Sometimes scholarly language, sometimes everyday language |

As a general rule, the sources created later in the Information Cycle undergo a more rigorous process, which helps to prevent mistakes and misunderstandings from being published.

Because of this, the sources created at the end of the Information Cycle—including scholarly journals and books—are often considered the most reliable and credible ones to use in college research.
Workshop Activity
Here are some claims about the causes of and treatments for sleep disruption. When you first read them, which claim seems most believable (credible) to you?

CLAIM A Your choice of linens (sheets, pillow-cases, blankets) can disrupt your sleep.
CLAIM B Spending more money on a new bed mattress won't improve your sleep.
CLAIM C Playing didgeridoo can improve sleep by decreasing snoring.

Now, examine the publication sources more closely, to decide how credible the claim is based on the evidence provided, as introduced in the Source Type Quality chart.

Use the link provided on the Workshop webpage to open the publication source that is assigned to you, and answer the following questions about that source.

1. What is the source type? Write the name of the source, too.
   - □ Blog ___________________________ □ Magazine______________________________
   - □ Aggregator site__________________ □ Scholarly journal________________________
   - □ News source_____________________ □ Book_______________________________

Skim the source, looking for the evidence it offers to support the claim made.

2. Evidence: Methodology
   What methods does the source describe or include as proof that the claim is true?
   - □ Personal testimony
   - □ Summary or link to another source
   - □ Quotations from eyewitnesses
   - □ Other____________________________________________________________
   - □ Quotations from experts
   - □ Original scientific research
   - □ Citations to prior research

3. Evidence: Expertise
   What experts—researchers, scientists, or other specialists regarding the study of sleep—are named who back up the claim? What is the expert’s title, and what organization is s/he associated with?

   Expert name/s: _____________________________________________________________
   Title/s: ___________________________________________________________________
   Organization/s: ____________________________________________________________

4. Do you now feel the claim is credible (believable) based on the evidence and authority shared in the source? Would you use this source in a college assignment? Why or why not?
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
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