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# Guide aims

This guide is aimed at new undergraduate students.

The guide will help you:

* Identify the different types of information available to you
* Recognise when to use one information type over another

# Sources of information



Test your knowledge of what you already know before reading further.



After submitting your answers, view your results to check your responses.

# Introduction

Throughout your studies you'll be asked to read lots of information, this could be in electronic or paper form. Most lecturers will refer you to **books** to read for your course.

* Use the [print and electronic book search facility](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/specificsearch/books/).

For information on specialist topics you will be asked to read articles from **journals.** These are the academic equivalent of popular magazines and tend to be published at regular intervals such as weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually.

* Use the [journal title search](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/specificsearch/journals/) or [journal article search](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/specificsearch/articles/).

You will also encounter **grey literature**. Grey literature is generally defined as material not formally published. Examples could be government and third-sector publications, and reports and statistics, but can also include conference proceedings and policy documents.

Many modules will have reading lists available via the [Reading Lists service](http://readinglists.glasgow.ac.uk/). Reading lists are a collection of book, journal and web-based material that aim to develop your understanding of course content.

# Introduction to books

Books tend to contain accepted information agreed upon over time rather than very novel research. Books can take a long time to reach print, by which time some of the information can be a bit out-of-date.

* If you are interested in new research and knowledge, then are books the right format for the information you are looking for? Would journals be a more appropriate source of information?

There are different types of books, some are **very general and cover a topic at a basic level**for example:

* VanPutte, C., et al. [Seeley's anatomy and physiology](http://encore.lib.gla.ac.uk/iii/encore/record/C__Rb3253595?lang=eng), New York : McGraw-Hill, c2017. 11th ed.

Other books can be **quite advanced and on a specific topic,**for example:

* Holt, R.I.G. and Hanley, N.A. [Essential endocrinology and diabetes [electronic resource]](http://encore.lib.gla.ac.uk/iii/encore/record/C__Rb2935409?lang=eng), Chichester, West Sussex : Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 6th ed.

Depending on the topic of interest it is **best to use the most recent edition of a book**. When you search for a book title or browse a library shelf you will see the different editions available.

# Introduction to journals

Journals are often organised into yearly volumes with weekly, monthly, or quarterly issues.

Each issue collates individual articles written by researchers and can be a high quality, authoritative source of information. Experts use articles to present findings from specialised research, so an understanding of the basic concepts and vocabulary of a subject is usually needed before using articles for assignments.

* Due to the specialist nature of many journals and journal articles, journals are generally not suitable if you are looking for an introduction to a subject.

Publishing a journal article can be a quick way to share research findings. As a result, journal articles are usually current, containing the latest thinking or discoveries on a topic.

Journals are sometimes referred to as periodicals or serials and journal articles are sometimes called papers.

# Introduction to grey literature

There are many formal guidelines relating to your profession that you will need to know about. These can either be guidelines for procedures, for example, [Management of Acute Dental Problems](http://www.sdcep.org.uk/published-guidance/management-of-acute-dental-problems-madp/) published by the Scottish Dental Clinical Effectiveness Programme or more general guidelines on about ethics and good practice, such as [Good health, fitness to practise and guidance](https://www.nmc.org.uk/education/becoming-a-nurse-or-midwife/when-studying-to-be-a-nurse-or-midwife/) from the Nursing & Midwifery Council.

Local and international bodies also publish guidance, for example, the [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/en/) or [Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN)](http://www.sign.ac.uk/index.html).

Most sources of grey literature do not go through a rigorous [peer review](http://www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/communicating-and-disseminating-research/peer-review-guide-researchers) process. As a result, grey literature can be seen as a less academic source of information than books and journals. Nevertheless grey literature is useful for seeing research from a professional perspective.

* Always follow any assessment guidance or advice given from lecturers when choosing which sources of information to use.

# Compare and contrast sources



One author has contributed to the three sources of information listed below. They all concern the social determinants of health. Read through the introduction, abstract and summary of the three sources.

* Reflect on the different sources you have read about in this resource. How is information presented in each example?
* Explore and contrast the different sources. How might you extract information from the different sources and use them in your work?

**Book** Marmot, M. and Wilkinson, R., 2005. *Social Determinants of Health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2n5hz39>

**Journal article** Hu, Y., Pikhart, H., Pająk, A., et al., 2016. Education, material condition and physical functioning trajectories in middle-aged and older adults in Central and Eastern Europe: a cross-country comparison. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 70(11), pp.1128-1135. <http://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-206548>.

**Grey literature** World Health Organization, 2013. *Review of social determinants and the health divide in the WHO European Region.* [online] World Health Organisation. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2n4DKHu>

# Information use in your field of study

Knowing what you now know, reflect on your current information-seeking behaviour. What tools do you currently use to find scholarly (academic) information? How effective are your current tools for effectively finding scholarly information?

Browse some of the [reading lists of modules in your School or Research Institute](https://glasgow.rl.talis.com/colleges/mvls.html). What information sources are you expected to engage with as part of your studies? Some course and modules may rely heavily on journal articles, whilst others may use a greater proportion of grey literature – it depends on the focus of the module.

What tools do experts in your field use to find information? The methods section of the journal article on the previous slide details their data sources: data from prior studies, interviews with participants, and bibliographic databases. How comfortable would you feel finding and using these sources? If you have just started, it may seem a daunting task, but you will develop these skills throughout your studies.

Libraries and digital libraries are often thought of as trusted collections of resources. You can search for information using the:

[Article search](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/specificsearch/articles/)

[Book search](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/specificsearch/books/)

[Bibliographic database collection](https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/specificsearch/databasesbysubject/)

[Search all the Library’s print and online resources](https://glasgow.summon.serialssolutions.com/?s.q=&s.cmd=addFacetValueFilters%28ContentType%2CNewspaper+Article%2Ct%7CContentType%2CBook+Review%2Ct%29#!/search?ho=t&fvf=ContentType,Newspaper%20Article,t%7CContentType,Book%20Review,t&l=en-UK&q=)

# Credits

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