Academic vs Popular

Academic Sources

• The author’s credentials are clear, and the author is usually an experience scholar (i.e., professor, someone affiliated with a university).
• Sources are cited in a bibliography and/or in footnotes.
• The source is published by a scholarly/academic press.
• The source is peer-reviewed.
• Includes mostly books and scholarly journals.

Popular Sources

• The author may not be named or have expertise in a particular field.
• Sources are rarely (if ever) included.
• The source’s publisher is unknown or a popular multidisciplinary press.
• The source is not peer-reviewed or is reviewed by a non-specialist editor.
• Includes websites, magazines, and newspapers.

How to tell if a source is academic in a library database:

• Apply a ‘peer-reviewed’ filter.
• Review the author(s) and publisher.
• Check for citations.
• When in doubt, come to the Writing Center!