

## Popular Press Sources

Popular press sources are magazines, newspapers, and books intended to inform or entertain general audiences. They sometimes feature lavish illustrations, rarely include citations, and often include advertisements.

### Author, Audience, and Purpose

Authors are usually journalists and paid professional writers.

Mass-market magazines, newspapers, and books tend to address broad audiences, but many popular press sources address a specific demographic or marketing niche.

The purpose of these sources is usually to entertain and inform while maintaining profitability by selling advertising space.

### Examples:

- *The New York Times*
- *Popular Science*
- *Time Magazine*
- *The Wall Street Journal*
- *Psychology Today*
- *National Geographic*

### Reliability

Standards for fact-checking, journalistic ethics, fairness, and balance vary considerably between publications and over time. Generally, there is some kind of editorial process, but errors, misrepresentations, and outright fraud are surprisingly common.

### Uses in the Research Process

Popular press sources are often the first source of information on a topic, making them valuable in the research process. Popular press sources can inspire the exploration of new topics. They can give background information about a topic or question. For some current events on which there are few scholarly articles, popular press articles may be the primary source of information. Popular press sources can also be used as primary sources which document history or demonstrate the way that mass media represent a phenomenon.

## Tips for Identifying Popular Press Sources

- **Content:** Magazines and newspapers often have many advertisements for products not directly related to the content, though popular press books rarely include advertisements.
- **Genre:** Writing is usually informal and accessible to a broad audience. While there are rarely citations or references in popular articles, online articles may link to sources. Popular press books may have limited citations.

## How to Find Popular Press Sources

The [Nexis Uni](#) database (also called *LexisNexis*) is great for finding newspaper articles. The [ProQuest Research Library](#) can be good for newspaper or magazine articles. The [New York Times](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#) are available for free through Mason Libraries. Many popular press magazines and newspapers have a web presence, and popular press books are often available in libraries or bookstores.

