

Primary and Secondary Research: What's the Difference?

Primary and secondary research play different roles in the research process. What's the difference?

During the initial inquiry stage of your research, you're collecting information from a range of sources to help formulate your research question. This may involve talking to people as well as reading. You should be trying to read as much as you can of what has already been written about your topic. This is called a "literature review" or **"secondary research"**.

Secondary sources may include:

- **printed works**—books, journals, newspapers, magazines
- **Internet sources**—websites, articles, journals and so on, available only online
- **other media sources**—films, TV and radio programmes
- **any other published information** containing ideas and information relating to your choice of topic

This secondary research can help you refine your research question and begin to answer it.

Then, it's time to formulate your research question and undertake further research to answer it. This may be further secondary research or your own **primary research**.

When you carry out primary research you collect your own data. Taking into consideration your findings from the secondary research, you gather the additional information you have identified as required to help you answer your research question.

Primary research techniques include:

- setting up experiments
- extracting information from original documents
- interviewing experts
- conducting formal surveys
- gathering information by other methods from primary sources

Whether you're undertaking primary or secondary research, or a combination, reflection plays a key role in evaluating your findings and formulating a reasoned argument that answers the research question.

Students are encouraged to check this YouTube Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kX4KQ3h7o0s&t=7s>