Hi, my name is Katie. And today, we'll discuss finding sources. We'll begin today's lesson by describing what I mean when I say a source. And we'll look at both primary and secondary sources. Next, we'll talk about where sources are found both at the library and on digital databases. Finally, we'll talk about how sources are used by performing a sample search using a digital database.

Let's begin by describing what I mean when I say a source. There are two types of sources-- primary, which are first person accounts, and secondary, which are easy to remember because they come to you second hand. Many media elements which you encounter in your daily life can be considered sources.

There are books, academic journal articles, opinion pieces, online sources, news stories, interviews, documentaries, magazine articles, memoirs, government reports. They're all sources. But it's important for you to remember that not all sources are credible. And it's your responsibility to evaluate these sources and choose reliable sources for your essay.

So let's talk about where to find some of these sources. One of the most important places for a researcher to turn to is the library. And we can consider the importance of this place in a number of ways.

The first is in terms of what's already there for you. Many sources are only available at the library because they either only come in print form, or they were created before the advent of the internet. Nevertheless, they're going to be very important to your research. And the library gives you access to them.

The next way that we need to think about the library is in terms of who's there for you. Librarians are there to help you, so don't be afraid to ask for help. However, it is important to remember that librarians are professionally-trained researchers. And not everyone at the library is a librarian. In particular, librarians are not only expert researchers. But they're also an expert at what their library has to offer. And they can help you find sources for topics that are obscure or difficult.

Finally, we can consider the usefulness of the library in terms of what it gives you access to. Academic libraries affiliated with colleges and universities have resources which may be more academic and therefore more relevant to your research. And they might also subscribe to academic search engines which help refined your search and cut down on the time that you spend researching.

Public libraries, however, are still very useful in their capacity to facilitate interlibrary loans. This is where you find a book in another library, and your library gives you access to it. In addition, the librarian at your public library may be able to help you ID and access databases relevant to your research.

What you need to remember about all three of these aspects is preparation. When you think about what's already there, you need to consider that it's not there all the time. Thankfully, most libraries have online catalogs that help you find research and save you a trip to the library looking for something that's not there. But often, you need to wait to access these physical sources.

When you think about who's there for you, you need to think about the librarian's schedule. You need to give the librarian enough time to help you. Either set an appointment, let the library know what you need ahead of time, do whatever you need to do to put them in the best position to help you.

Finally, when you think about what it can get for you, you need to consider that interlibrary loans, although they're handy, they take a long time to come. You need to plan your research accordingly and don't wait till the last minute.

Digital sources-- although they are readily available, they come with their own set of nuances. For example, you need to think about where to look. Academic libraries give you access to academic databases which will narrow your search. However, regular search engines such as Google, Yahoo, or Bing are also very helpful.

Then you want to think about how to look, what to say. You want to vary your search terms between different search engines to get different results. And you can also use advanced search options to narrow the scope of your search.

Finally, you want to think about how to choose your sources. You need to consider credibility and reliability and also consider availability. Depending on which database and search terms you use, you're going to get different biases on your topic.

In order to consider how sources are used, I think it's best to use an example. Fortunately, more and more credible publications are appearing online or providing digital editions of their content. So it's really important for a modern researcher to have a strong skill set when navigating digital databases.

Although we can use a variety of search engines, for our examples today, we'll use a Google search. We'll use an assignment that I recently gave to my students regarding their study of the novel *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. I ask my students to select a topic inspired by the novel and to

write me a variety of research essays on it.

So many of them chose the topic post-traumatic stress disorder. So let's imagine that we're researching the working thesis war causes post-traumatic stress disorder. Here you can see that a quick Google search gives us a variety of results. Over here, we have a definition. Over here, we have several links to some articles.

Now, when you're choosing which articles you want to work with for your project, you want to be ruthlessly critical. For example, over here, we have a list of articles that have paid to appear first on the page. So even though they come up at the top of the page, and they even have their own section over here, it doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to be appropriate for your scholarly research project.

Similarly, Google will often sort things by how popular they are. So we have here Wikipedia, which is often a good place to start to get a general understanding of your research. Therefore, it's a very popular and commonly accessed source. But you can't use Wikipedia as a scholarly source because anyone can edit this. It's not peer reviewed.

So instead, you want to look for articles that are produced by notable sources. For example, here we have an article by *The New York Times.* So this is likely to be a reliable resource. Also, any .gov source is sponsored by the government. So it's likely to be peer reviewed and reliable as well. You probably want to stay away from articles like this one in *Vanity Fair.* It's not a scholarly source.

Now, you can spend a lot of time working with this research and navigating it yourself. But there are ways to narrow the scope of your search to come up with more accurate search results and cut down on the time that you spend researching. One of those ways is using Google's scholarly website scholar.Google.com.

Here, we'll use the exact same search term, but it's going to yield different results. Now we are getting results from *New England Journal of Medicine, Occupational Medicine.* Down here, you can see we have a link to books.google.com so you know that it's a published book. These are likely to be very reliable sources. And you don't have to sift through the other stuff to get to them.

In addition, you can use the advanced search options here on the left to narrow your search even further. You can also vary your search terms to vary your results. For example, we could use a less formal search term by just using the acronym PTSD. And now we're getting a whole new list of results. And again, we're still in Google Scholar. So it's very likely that these results are reliable sources for

your essay.

You can also vary your search term to get different angles or different takes on your topic. For example, because we're studying *The Things They Carried,* we could search for post-traumatic stress disorder plus the Vietnam War. Now we can get results that are very specific to the subject matter that we're studying in class. And you can see that these are educational sites, university-sponsored sites, published books. These are going to be very reliable sources.

One other way that you can vary your search terms is to vary the words that you use. Right now what this is searching for is post-traumatic stress disorder anywhere in the article. So if you look, for example, at this one, we have Vietnam and war, but they're separate, and then we have trauma.

Then in this example, we have stressful rather than stress. So if you want to get the exact words in your search, you just have to put quotation marks around them. And now we'll only get post-traumatic stress disorder as it appears exactly in my search terms.

Researching online can often be overwhelming because of the challenge of incorporating so much information or because the challenge of adding something significant to all that information is really intimidating. So I encourage you to use these smart online research strategies to focus your writing so that your research doesn't lead to writer's block and procrastination.

In today's lesson, we talked about what sources are by looking at examples of both primary and secondary sources. Then we talked about how to find sources by going to both the library and accessing digital databases. Finally, we talked about how to tackle information that could be overwhelming to a researcher by narrowing and varying our search terms with a sample research topic. I hope that this tutorial was helpful. Thank you very much for joining me today.