

Reliable Evidence

“Good ethics begins with good facts” - Anonymous

In this class, you will be required to write several papers, which will require additional research on your part. Moreover, as you delve into a variety of topics and start constructing your own arguments, some additional research may be necessary to provide adequate support for your claims. Below is a list of several essential qualities that reliable evidence will possess.

- Use reliable sources.** Reliable sources include peer-reviewed journal articles and encyclopedia articles from scholarly experts. Unreliable sources include blogs, websites, and encyclopedias such as Wikipedia that change frequently and that may be written by people with no academic expertise.
- Use unbiased sources.** Ensure that your sources are as unbiased as possible. When sources are overtly biased, they quickly lose their credibility in the academic realm. This especially holds true for finding information off blogs and websites of political organizations with an overtly biased agenda.
- Consider opposing sources.** In order to strengthen your counterarguments, you will want to be familiar with sources that oppose your position. Also, by carefully considering counter-arguments, you demonstrate that you are scientifically-minded thinker who is willing to look for disconfirming evidence.
- Use recent sources.** When quoting statistics and certain factual claims, using recent sources is especially important. These words of advice are also relevant to ‘hot’ ethical topics such as stem cell research, cloning, or nanotechnology in which monthly, if not weekly, breakthroughs are currently being reported in peer-reviewed journals.
- Accurately cite your sources.** When constructing papers, you are required to use acceptable citation methods such as APA style. This is important for two fundamental reasons. First, you give authors the appropriate credit. Second, allegations of plagiarism are avoided. (Remember, plagiarism is passing off another person’s work as your own. This can be done inadvertently by using unorthodox or uninformed citation methods.)
- Quote authors within context.** Try to be fair to the authors by representing their views accurately. One way to do this is to not quote the authors out of context. This occurs in the following example. An author writes a paper in *support* of embryonic stem cell research, but at some point in the paper, s/he discusses an opposing view in a credible sort of way. A student quotes the author out of context if s/he decides to use the author to support an argument *against* stem cell research.