

**BEAM—A Solution That Might Shine**

This table, created from the ideas developed by Joseph Bizup, describes the roles that sources can play (some of the ways they can be used) in your finished assignment, such as a term paper. Bizup called his model BEAM, an acronym that stands for background, exhibits (or evidence), argument, and method.

Role for Sources	How to Use Them	Kinds of Sources That Can Have That Role
Background	Writers rely on these sources for general factual information. For instance, a writer could use background information to introduce a setting, situation, or problem in the term paper.	Usually secondary sources and tertiary sources, but, basically, just anything other than journal articles that report original research. Some examples: literature review articles, non-fiction books, and biographies (secondary) and field guides and Wikipedia (tertiary).
Exhibits or Evidence	Writers interpret and analyze sources like these in the same way they are used as exhibits and evidence in a museum or a court.	Usually primary sources. Some examples: newspaper articles from the time in question, works of literature or art, and research articles.
Argument	Writers engage with these sources that they agree with or disagree with. The sources are usually written by scholars in their field. For instance, writers often include sources that describe earlier work that is specifically relevant to their own research question and their thesis (what they consider to be the answer to that question.)	Usually primary and secondary sources. Some examples of primary sources: research articles in the sciences and humanities and recordings of performances in the arts. Some examples of secondary sources: commentaries and criticisms, such as those that appear in literature reviews, textbooks, and blogs that comment on research.
Method	Writers follow the key terms, concepts, or manner of working that are explained in these sources. That is, they pay attention to and use the relevant work of others before them to carry out their own work and then describe it in the term paper.	Often secondary sources. Some examples: literature reviews, textbooks, and blogs that comment on research.