

# PRIMARY RESOURCE PAPERS

In some history courses, you will be asked to analyze an event or develop a research paper based mostly on primary resources. A primary resource paper allows you to draw your own conclusions about the event from the sources.

A primary resource is a document from a historical event that “provides [the reader] with raw evidence or data” (Turabian, 3.1.1). Examples of primary resources include:

- Letters
- Diaries
- Government documents
- Graphs
- Reports

Secondary sources are a great way to support your conclusions from the primary resources, but your paper should not be based solely on secondary sources.

## RESEARCHING

1. **Before researching, have a strong understanding of the event.** Understanding the minor details, people, and occurrences that compose your event will help you develop a strong question for your research paper to address.
2. **Develop a question that uses primary documents to explore the event.** This will help focus your paper and research as you aim to answer this question. The question should be specific. (i.e., how did the Romans perceive the Germanic tribes based on letters from a general?)
3. **List certain documents or people that may pertain to your question.** This will help start your research as you can begin finding resources created by the people listed or reading through the primary documents that may pertain to your question.
4. **Read through the primary document.** Pay attention to the authors, dates, and events mentioned within the resource. Focus on wording and references to other countries or people. This attention to detail will help develop your argument.
5. **Find secondary sources that support your conclusions.** This adds authority behind your conclusions as other experts agree with your analysis.
6. **Apply your research to your argument.** Once you’ve analyzed the source, consider what it reveals about the events you are researching or arguing about.
7. **Develop your thesis statement and organization.** Use your research and see how it supports your thesis statement. Organize your reasons and evidence accordingly. Begin drafting.

PRACTICE NOW