

Primary Sources Strengths and Limitations

Strengths	Limitations
Provide information on who, what, where, when, why, and how of an event;	Are not thoroughly objective sources;
Provide written, printed, or graphic information;	Bias and agenda of the author to be considered
Can clarify the purpose of the communication or transaction;	Often more to the story than what is presented;
Can be a clue to the level of education of the author	The identity of the author is often unclear (especially in the case of government documents);
Sometimes offer evidence of emotion, or the mood of an event;	Author is often no longer living and therefore unavailable to consult or verify;
Can stimulate the personal involvement of the reader.	Possibly difficult to read: handwriting difficult to decipher; words or phrases that are unfamiliar, or their meaning has changed over time.
All primary sources should be evaluated in conjunction with other evidence to determine whether the document presents information that is exceptional or conforming with previously established patterns.	