

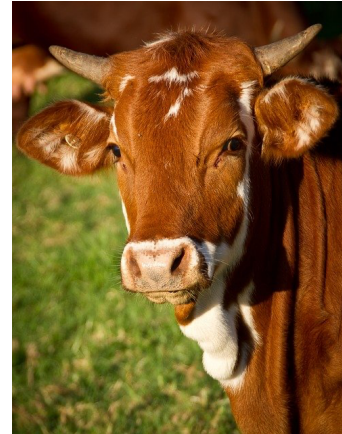
# How to Milk a Source for All It's Worth

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*Find a document. Pull out the fact you were looking for. Move on.*

If that describes how you work with the sources you find, you're probably leaving a lot of information and ideas on the table.

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## What Type of Source Is It?

Sources come in two types:

- Original – the first creation of that document
- Derivative – things that are made from the original

If it's a derivative source – an index, abstract, etc. – look for the original.

## Do You Understand It?

Is the source you're using part of a larger source? How does it fit in with other records that should have been created at the same time?

Check out the introduction, the "about" section, etc. to become familiar with the source. The more you understand a source, the better your conclusions will be about information you find in it.

## What Does It Say?

It's tempting to skim through a document and pull out random bits of information. Avoid the temptation! Read it completely and thoroughly. As you do so:

- Define all unfamiliar words and phrases
- Identify the people
- Identify the places

If you are working with a derivative source, what other sources does it mention? Look for footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies.

## Generate Ideas for More Research

Once you've worked through the document, use it as a springboard to find more information.

Events create records. However, we can overlook many events that are in the documents we use. To find more events, use the **Noun-Verb Method**.

**Noun:** Thing (in this case, usually a person)

**Verb:** An action

Each instance of a noun-verb combination is an **event**. Events can cause records to be created.

### Step 1: Find the events

Look for people doing things or being something.

- He was born.
- She was married.
- She graduated from school.
- He lost his business.
- She was buried.
- He was a GAR member.

The more events you can find in a source, the more things you'll have to work with in Step 2.

### Step 2: Brainstorm

When you pull out all of the noun-verb combinations, brainstorm about what records could be created around those events.

- What people or organizations were involved in the event?
- What was the process for that event happening or being recorded?
- Who would have recorded it?

After you have a list of record possibilities, then you can start looking for them.

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Getting the most out of any source involves evaluation, analysis, and creativity. There is some time and effort involved, but the results are worth it.