

Kind, Sort, and Type

Kind = if you talk about a 'kind' of thing you are talking about one of the types of sorts of that things:

"This prize is the biggest of its **kind** in the world"

Sort = if you talk about a particular sort of something you are talking about a class of things that have particular features in common and that belong to a larger group of related things:

"There are so many different **sorts** of pastas available these days."

Type = a type of something is a group of those things that have particular features in common.

"In 2000, 25% of cars were of this **type**."

Very often it makes no difference which of these words we use. But there are some subtle differences. In fact, sometimes only one of these words is correct. For example, it would be wrong to use 'sort' or 'kind' in sentence 1 below. Compare these three English sentences:

1. What is your blood type? = a precise named category.
2. What sort of prices do they charge? = a description rather than a named category.
3. What kind of car is that? = a named category, but not necessarily as precise as 1 above, but a descriptive answer is also possible.

So...in summary:

'type' = means a precisely defined category. It is slightly more formal, more 'scientific' and therefore might be more acceptable in academic papers.

'sort' = more general, often about character rather than definition.

'kind' = a mixture between the two, usually referring to large categories or families of things that are naturally related.