

The CyFair Writing Center Scholarly Sources

A **"scholarly"** or **"academic"** journal publishes articles written by experts for experts that are **"peer reviewed."**

What is peer review?

Peer review is a process in which two or more <u>experts</u> in a field read an article and make suggestions for revisions before it is accepted for publication. To pass peer review, the article must give an original perspective on an important topic. It also must be thoroughly researched, logically argued, and well written.

Most articles that are submitted to journals do not make it through peer review. The articles that do get published usually have extensive revisions. Most articles you see are the result of years of work by many people. To learn if a journal requires articles to be peer reviewed, locate journal's information in the database you are using or the journal's website.

Why should I use scholarly articles?

Scholarly articles are the most credible sources you can find because of the rigorous peer-review process. They are written by people who have studied this subject for many years and they have been reviewed by other people with similar experience. They are thoroughly researched, which means you can "mine" the article's bibliography to find other sources that might be useful for your paper.

Where can I find scholarly articles?

The easiest way to find them is by using an EBSCO or JSTOR database. Access to these databases is usually provided by your campus library. If you use an EBSCO database, such as Academic Search Complete, check the "scholarly sources" box on the search page before you start your search.



Developed by Amy Larsen for the Lone Star CyFair Writing Center, 2013, using information from: Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers. *A Writer's Reference*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. 352. Print.

How can I recognize scholarly sources?

The scholarly sources are long (about 10-20 pages). <u>Book **reviews**</u> do not count, even if they are published in an academic journal, because they are not original research and do not go through peer-review. Use the following checklist to evaluate your source¹:

- □ Is the source peer-reviewed?
- Does the source use academic voice (precise wording and appropriate tone)?
- □ Is the source written by someone who is considered to be (or consulted) an expert in the field?
- Does this source provide facts and/or other adequate support for their claims or opinions?
- □ Is the source published by a well-known academic, scientific, or university press?
- □ Is the information in the source still current?
- Does the source use and cite other reliable sources?

What are the challenges of using scholarly articles in my research?

Because scholarly articles are written for experts, not undergraduate students, they are difficult to read. There will be words and ideas that are new to you. Start your research early, read several abstracts or introductions first to find an article you think will be useful, then give yourself plenty of time to read the article and take notes.

You may not find a scholarly article that is exactly about your topic. Research, peer-review, and revision take a long time, so you will not find scholarly articles about current events. However, scholarly articles can provide useful context. For example, if you write a paper about an act of gun violence that occurred a few months ago, you will not find scholarly sources about this exact event, but you can find scholarly sources about gun legislation, similar events in the past, the NRA, etc.

What about books?

Books should be evaluated by the same criteria as journal articles. Although books are not often called "peer reviewed," many books written by experts in the field or published by well-known academic or scientific presses are revised heavily by other experts.

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¹Adapted from http://www.lonestar.edu/library/15264.htm