

How to Identify a Scholarly Article In a Peer-Reviewed or Refereed Journal

Literature #7

MSU Libraries subscribes to approximately 15,000 print or electronic serials. Some of these, such as *Time* and *Newsweek* are intended for a mass circulation audience and are information sources for current events or issues; others such as *JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association)*, publish original research intended for a scholarly audience. The ability to differentiate between these two journal types will be helpful in fulfilling the requirements of a particular class assignment or, on another level, for conducting a successful thesis/dissertation literature review. The questions below are designed to help you tell if the article is from a scholarly journal,

Where was the article found?

In a **subject-oriented index** (e.g. *PsycINFO*, *ERIC*, *Engineering Index/EI Compendex Plus*. Or *AGRICOLA*) If so, it is more likely to be a scholarly article.

In a **general index** (e.g. *Academic Search Elite*, *Masterfile Fulltext*, or *Newspaper Source*) If so, it is more likely **not** to be a scholarly article.

What is the journal like?

Does it have a list of reviewers or an editorial board listed inside?
Is it sponsored by an academic or professional organization?
Is the article intended to be for scholars and other researchers?
If so, it is more likely to be a scholarly article.

What does the article look like?

Are there footnotes?
Is there a bibliography or a list of references at the end of the article?
Is there an abstract (a brief summary of the article) at the beginning?
Are the author's credentials listed?
Is there an appendix or tables following the article?
A scholarly article will have *most* of these characteristics.

This handout is designed to help you recognize a scholarly article. If you need more help, please ask a reference librarian. We are here to help you.

Tip: Ulrich's Periodical Directory (Ref Z 6941.U5) contains a list of all active refereed or peer reviewed journals under appropriate subject headings. Check also the main alphabetical list to verify if a particular journal title is refereed.