

# What is a Scholarly Article?

## Ever Creek Library Learning Commons

*Students are often required to find 'Scholarly Articles' for their research assignments. Do you know what a scholarly article is?*

Scholarly or peer-reviewed articles are written by experts in academic or professional fields and are intended to communicate new information to other experts or scholars in that subject area.

Unlike material you may find on the open web or in 'popular press' supermarket magazines, scholarly articles can be trusted to contain accurate information and research data from subject experts.

They are excellent sources for finding out what has been studied or researched on a topic as well as to find bibliographies that point to other relevant sources of information.

### **How can you determine if your article is scholarly and/or peer reviewed?**

#### **1. Consult the chart.**

The chart on the back lists the general criteria for determining what type of periodical article you have. Keep in mind that some articles do not meet all the criteria. When in doubt, consult a Reference Librarian or your instructor.

#### **2. Limit your database search to academic, scholarly, or peer reviewed journals.**

Many databases allow you to limit your search to academic, scholarly, or peer reviewed journals (terminology varies between databases). Although limiting provides a preliminary filter, not all articles within a scholarly journal are scholarly, so you will need to evaluate each article individually against the criteria in the chart.

#### **3. Ask a Librarian**

Your librarian can help you find a scholarly article or determine whether an article you have is scholarly. Ask at the desk.

#### **4. Are "peer reviewed" and "scholarly" the same thing?**

Peer reviewed journals require that articles are read and evaluated by experts in the field before they are accepted for publication. Although most scholarly articles are refereed or peer reviewed, some are not. Generally instructors are happy with either peer reviewed or scholarly articles, but if your article HAS to be peer-reviewed, you will need to find that information in the front of the journal,

# Distinguishing Scholarly Articles

| <p><b>Examples</b></p> <p><b>SCHOLARLY *</b><br/>American Economic Review<br/>Journal of Communication<br/>Educational Theory</p>   | <p><b>TRADE</b><br/>Advertising Age<br/>Industry Week<br/>Progressive Grocer</p>   | <p><b>NEWS OR OPINION</b><br/>New Republic<br/>Scientific American<br/>U.S. News &amp; World Report</p>   | <p><b>POPULAR</b><br/>People<br/>Glamour<br/>Shape</p>   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to inform and report on original research or experimentation to the rest of the scholarly world</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to provide news and information to people in a particular industry or profession</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to provide general information to an educated lay audience</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to entertain or persuade</li> <li>-a not so hidden agenda is to sell products or services</li> </ul>                               |
| <p><b>Cited Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-has substantial footnotes and/or bibliographies</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-occasionally include brief footnotes and/or bibliographies</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-occasionally include brief bibliographies</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-rarely include bibliographies</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Authors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-scholars or researchers in the field, discipline, or specialty</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-practitioners or educators within the industry or profession</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-magazine staff writers or free-lance writers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-magazine staff writers or free-lance writers</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-technical terminology appropriate to the discipline</li> <li>-reader is assumed to have a similar scholarly background</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-jargon of the industry or profession</li> <li>-reader is assumed to have background in the field</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-language geared to educated layperson</li> <li>-does not emphasize a specialty but does assume a certain level of education</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-simple language in order to meet a minimum education level</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Article Appearance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-graphs, charts, and photographs that support the research</li> <li>-articles are lengthy and often structured into these sections: abstract, literature review methodology, results, conclusion, bibliography</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-photographs and illustrations used to support the article but also for aesthetic purposes to draw in readers</li> <li>-brief articles with no structure</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-photographs and illustrations used to support the article but also for aesthetic purposes to draw in readers</li> <li>-usually brief articles but can be longer and sometimes structured</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-photographs and illustrations used for aesthetic purposes to draw in readers</li> <li>-brief articles with no structure</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Journal Appearance (if applicable)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-plain format, usually black and white</li> <li>-little or no advertising</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-attractive glossy format, lots of color</li> <li>-extensive advertising aimed at people in the field</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-attractive glossy format, lots of color</li> <li>-extensive advertising aimed at the general public</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-attractive glossy format, lots of color</li> <li>-extensive advertising aimed at the general public</li> </ul>                     |

\*Scholarly articles are sometimes referred to as refereed or peer reviewed. Articles appearing in refereed or peer reviewed journals are read and evaluated by experts in the field before they are accepted for publication.