Scholarly Journals & Articles

A **scholarly journal** is also known as an **academic journal**, a **peer-reviewed journal**, or a **refereed journal**.

*Peer-reviewed*: subjected to a rigorous evaluation through a peer-review process.

- The process involves an editorial board who requests subject experts to review and evaluate submitted articles before accepting them for publication.
- Submissions are evaluated using very specific criteria.
- This process is used to maintain the quality and integrity of the material that the journal publishes.
- Members of the editorial board are listed at the beginning of the journal issue.

(Niseteo, “What is a Scholarly Journal?”, www.lib.sfu.ca)

The following is an overview of scholarly journal articles, as explained by Leslie F. Stebbins in **Student Guide to Research in the Digital Age**:

The purpose, author expertise, writing style, appearance, length, and vocabulary differ greatly between scholarly journals and other periodicals such as magazines and newspapers...

Scholarly journal articles are the essential resource for reporting the findings of **academic research**. Professors or other experts **specializing in a particular discipline** or area of study write journal articles. For any substantive research paper, it is essential to include information from at least some journal articles.

Journal articles provide more recent research findings than books because books take longer to write and publish. Journal articles also provide a **more focused analysis of a specific topic**...

In addition, scholarly articles typically contain extensive bibliographies (lists of citations) on which the research is based. The articles are written for a limited audience of other scholars and students in the field. Journals have minimal advertising and pictures, other than graphs and tables. They tend to be more plain-looking than magazines, whether online or in print. The writing style can be more technical and complex than that found in popular magazines. Journals are frequently written in a formal style that reflects the language and methodology of the discipline. (42-43)

Common elements found in a scholarly journal article:

- Title
- Abstract (summary of article contents)
- Background
- Research methodology/procedure
- Results and discussion
- Graphs or charts
- Footnotes or endnotes
- References or bibliographies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria/Element</th>
<th>Scholarly Journals</th>
<th>Trade Publications</th>
<th>Popular Magazines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Facilitate scholarly communication between members of a particular academic discipline and/or the public</td>
<td>Provide information to members of a particular industry or profession</td>
<td>Provide general information and entertainment to the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publishers</strong></td>
<td>Academic organizations</td>
<td>Professional and/or trade organizations</td>
<td>Commercial/private publishers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Authors**      | • Written by academics or experts in the field  
                  • Includes author credentials  
                  • Affiliations of authors are listed | • Industry experts, professionals, or practitioners  
                  • May be written by the editorial staff or a freelance writer | • May be written by the editorial staff or a freelance writer  
                  • Usually paid for the article  
                  • May or may not have subject expertise |
| **Audience**     | • Scholarly researcher  
                  • Faculty  
                  • Students | • Professionals in the field  
                  • Interested people who are non-specialists | • General public  
                  • Interested people who are non-specialists |
| **Content**      | • Article contains an abstract  
                  • Reports on original research & reviews while expanding on current theories  
                  • Critiques previously published materials  
                  • Some articles may be primary sources  
                  • Information is specific to a certain academic discipline or field and usually requires professional or academic knowledge to be fully understood | • Exclusively professional, industry, or trade information  
                  • Reports on current news, trends, or products of a certain industry  
                  • Practical information for professionals working in the field/industry  
                  • Articles can be fact, anecdote, and/or opinion | • Typically a secondary source; a discussion on someone else’s research  
                  • May include personal narrative or opinion  
                  • Covers news, current events, hobbies, & other interests  
                  • No special knowledge or vocabulary required to understand |
| **Accountability** | Peer-reviewed (see definition)  
                  • Very few illustrations  
                  • Mostly graphs, charts, or maps that support the text  
                  • Few or no advertisements | • Evaluated by editorial staff who may/may not be experts in the field  
                  • Very rarely peer-reviewed | • Evaluated by editorial staff – not experts in the field  
                  • Edited for format & style  
                  • Not peer-reviewed |
| **Graphics**     | • Very few illustrations  
                  • Mostly graphs, charts, or maps that support the text  
                  • Few or no advertisements | • Photographs, graphics, and charts  
                  • Trade/industry related advertisements targeted to professionals in the field | • Attractive in appearance – in color, with many graphics/images  
                  • Many advertisements and photographs |
### A COMPARISON

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| **Language**     | ▪ Specialized terminology or jargon of the field  
                     ▪ Assumes that the reader is familiar with the subject | ▪ Specialized terminology or jargon of the field but not as technical  
                     ▪ Geared to any educated audience with an interest in the field | ▪ Short articles, written in a simpler language  
                     ▪ Vocabulary is general and understandable to most readers  
                     ▪ Does not assume familiarity with any subject |
| **Layout & Organization** | ▪ Very structured  
                     ▪ Includes abstract, goals/objectives, methodology, results/evidence, discussion, conclusion, bibliography  
                     ▪ Page numbers are consecutive; for example, Issue 1 will end on page 455, so Issue 2 will begin on page 456  
                     ▪ Always has citations, footnotes/endnotes, and/or bibliographies | ▪ Informal  
                     ▪ Organized like a newsletter or journal  
                     ▪ Typically printed in glossy paper  
                     ▪ Very rarely has citations, footnotes/endnotes, and/or bibliographies | ▪ Very informal  
                     ▪ May include non-standard formatting  
                     ▪ Typically printed in glossy paper  
                     ▪ May not present supporting evidence or conclusion  
                     ▪ Usually NO citations, footnotes/endnotes, and/or bibliographies |
| **References**   | ▪ Quotes and facts are verifiable  
                     ▪ Sources are always cited in footnotes or bibliographies  
                     ▪ Bibliographies are lengthy and cite other scholarly writings | ▪ Occasionally includes brief bibliographies  
                     ▪ Not required to report any research results | ▪ Sources are sometimes cited but do not usually include footnotes or bibliography  
                     ▪ Information is often second or third hand; original source is rarely mentioned |
| **Examples**     | ▪ *Journal of Biomechanics*  
                     ▪ *The Linguistic Review*  
                     ▪ *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*  
                     ▪ *History of Education Quarterly*  
                     ▪ *Northwest Journal of Linguistics* | ▪ *Canadian Banker*  
                     ▪ *Sight and Sound*  
                     ▪ *Architectural Record*  
                     ▪ *PC World*  
                     ▪ *School Library Journal* | ▪ *National Geographic*  
                     ▪ *Psychology Today*  
                     ▪ *Scientific American*  
                     ▪ *Sports Illustrated* |

The above chart was adapted and modified from Indiana University Bloomington’s Libraries page, “Scholarly, Popular, and Trade Publications” ([www.libraries.iub.edu](http://www.libraries.iub.edu)) as well as Simon Fraser University Library’s page, “What is a Scholarly Journal?” ([www.lib.sfu.ca](http://www.lib.sfu.ca))

_Last modified: 4/2/14_
Databases for your research:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How to narrow down your search

The key to relevant results is using the right combination of search terms:

- Use a combination of search terms
- Use synonyms
- Use Boolean techniques
  - AND, OR, NOT
  - Quotation marks around phrases or specific terms
  - *(asterisk gives results of any word that begins with the letters before the asterisk)*
- Keep trying different combinations until you find what you’re looking for – don’t give up!

Every database is different, but most will give you options on how you can narrow down search results. If you have too many results, try the following filters:

- Choose Full text
- Choose Academic Journals / Scholarly Journals / Peer-Reviewed articles
- Choose a range of publication years
  - Most instructors want only the most recent research; verify with your teacher what range of years you should search through. Depending on your topic, articles that were published in the 70s or 80s may still be acceptable/valid.
- Choose a specific region; for example, North America or United States
- Specify the language of the article to English

*If your results are too limited, you may need to eliminate some filters*