

# What are Journals?

## “Information” guide

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### What is a Journal?

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A journal is a publication that is published both in a particular format and is issued at fixed intervals (eg. weekly, monthly, and yearly). Journals can also be referred to as periodicals, magazines and serials. There are many different types of journals available. Understanding the type of journal will help you identify whether or not the articles will be of value to you in your research.

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### Types of Journals

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<b>Peer Reviewed Journals</b>	“A publication is considered to be <b>peer reviewed</b> if its articles go through an official editorial process that involves review and approval by the author's peers (people who are experts in the same subject area). Most (but not all) scholarly publications are peer reviewed.” <i>(Proquest database information, 2007)</i>
<b>Scholarly/Academic Journals</b>	A publication is <i>scholarly</i> when the articles' authors are academics/scholars /researchers /experts in the field. There <b>may</b> be a review or refereeing process. The articles will be supported by bibliographies and will assume readers' prior knowledge of the subject.
<b>Magazines or Popular Journals</b>	Popular journals or magazines are available in many formats. The content is often written by the magazine staff. The content is entertaining with minimal analysis. A magazine usually contains a miscellaneous collection of articles, stories, poems, and pictures and is directed at the general reading public
<b>Trade Journals</b>	These are written to give information aimed at specific professions, trades or businesses. They are often practical in nature and are written by specialists in particular fields. They focus on matters concerning a particular industry or group of industries. Also called a "trade publication"
<b>Current Affairs/Opinion</b>	These are written to give general information covering a range of topics. They are often written by journalists but can have articles by scholars. There may be a specific bias (e.g. with political journals).
<b>Professional Organisation / Society Journals</b>	These are produced by particular professional organisations to give information to specific professions. The articles may be written by staff journalists or by experts in certain fields.
<b>Newspapers</b>	Newspapers are designed to cover breaking news. The quality of information ranges from high to sensationalist content. The articles are usually written by staff journalists with no author acknowledgement. There can also be features written by specialists whose name is given -- a “Byline” -- which gives the name, and often the position, of the writer of the article.

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### Journal Articles

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In Peer Reviewed and Scholarly journals you can be confident that published articles are of a high research standard and academic in focus. (**Note:** Not all articles in a peer reviewed journal are refereed, e.g. letters to editors.) How do you know if an article found in a journal is from a peer reviewed journal? How can you identify peer reviewed journals? The following can assist you to find whether or not a journal is peer reviewed.

<p><b>Ulrich's Periodical directory</b></p> <p>Available online through the Library Catalogue</p>	<p>Provides information on serials published throughout the world. It covers all subjects, and includes publications that are published regularly or irregularly. Nearly a quarter of a million consumer and trade magazines, academic and scholarly publications, monographic series, newsletters, newspapers, electronic publications, 'zines, and many other types of serial publications and services published throughout the world on all subjects, are profiled. Details covered include standard bibliographic data, price, plus where a given title is indexed and/or abstracted. Ulrich's International Periodical Directory is a very useful guide to serial literature. <b>It is also one of the few sources for determining the status of a serial title</b> e.g. whether a title is a trade publication, peer reviewed etc..</p>
<p><b>Using a Database to find articles</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some databases identify peer reviewed journal titles</li> <li>○ Some databases allow you to <b>Limit your search to refereed/peer reviewed articles</b> by either ticking a checkbox or using <b>Advanced Search</b> to search a Publication Type field.</li> <li>○ Check the Database <b>Help</b> information for ways of identifying article types.</li> </ul> <p><b>(Note:</b> Databases often make mistakes when deciding whether or not an article is peer reviewed. To make sure, check the journal's website.)</p>
<p><b>Individual journals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Examine the individual journal's website. The information aimed at authors wanting to submit articles should indicate whether or not there is a review process.</li> </ul>

## Tips for Evaluating Other Journal and Newspaper Articles

The following criteria should be applied to articles where you are not sure they have been through a review/referee process:

<p><b>Where did you find the article?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Finding the article in a subject index, e.g. PsycInfo, the article is more likely to be a scholarly or even peer reviewed article.</li> <li>○ If the article is from a general index, e.g. a Newspaper source, then it is not likely to be peer reviewed, but it may be scholarly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Author</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is the author named?</li> <li>○ Are the author's qualifications / credentials / professional associations given?</li> <li>○ Can you identify an institution, if any, to which the author belongs?</li> <li>○ Is contact information for the author included?</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the purpose of the article?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is the article designed to sell a product or service?</li> <li>○ Is the article giving facts that you already know are correct?</li> <li>○ Is the article in a journal you know to have a bias?</li> <li>○ Is the article presenting research findings?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Audience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who is the intended audience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ General public and at what age level?</li> <li>○ Other academics or scholars?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is the language of a high scholarly order?</li> <li>○ Is the language sensationalist?</li> <li>○ Is the language level low and sometimes inflammatory?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Type of Journal</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What does the journal look like?</li> <li>○ Who is the publisher? Is it a professional organisation / commercial publisher / university / scholarly society?</li> <li>○ Are there pictures/images? Are they appropriate to content as in research findings or are they sensationalist?</li> <li>○ Is there advertising? If so, who is the advertising aimed at?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Article appearance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are there footnotes and/or a bibliography?</li> <li>○ Is there an abstract?</li> </ul>



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