



What is a Peer-Reviewed Article?

Peer-reviewed articles are published with the intent of sharing new research and information from specialized fields with researchers, professionals, and students. The process of peer review helps to ensure that each published article is unique, accurate, credible, and objective. Peer-reviewed articles can be published in print journals, online journals, and academic and research organizations' websites.

Characteristics of a Peer-Reviewed Article

- Information is organized into sections with headings: Abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, and references.
- Long and in-depth; 10-20 pages is normal.
- Includes graphs or tables but few, if any, images or advertisements.
- Includes specialized or field-specific language.
- Information is presented objectively, without bias.
- Includes reference lists and in-text citations.
- Published quarterly or semi-annually.

Purpose

- Inform other scholars and students in higher education of new research and findings.

Authorship

- Experts in their fields: researchers conducting primary research, practitioners, professors and scholars. Credentials are either provided in the article or easy to access.
- Often an organization will publish a journal (e.g., the American Medical Association publishes *JAMA* and the *Archives of Internal Medicine*).

Finding a Peer-Reviewed Article

1. Go to library.clackamas.edu
2. Select *Databases A-Z*.
3. Select *EBSCOhost*.
4. Perform a search in an EBSCO database.
5. Look at the lefthand column on your results page.
6. Find the section titled *Limit To*.
7. Mark the box labeled *Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals*.
8. Wait for the page to refresh.
9. Voila! All search results come from peer-reviewed journals.

Note: When you restrict an EBSCO search to bring back only items published in peer-reviewed journals, those results will still contain editorial and opinion pieces, book reviews, news blurbs, and other types of short, non-scholarly articles. These types of articles appear in peer-reviewed publications but are not always acceptable for academic research. Yikes! Always evaluate your sources before including them in your research.

Reading a Peer-Reviewed Article

Save time by learning how to quickly skim peer-reviewed journal articles.

Read the Abstract

At the beginning of every peer-reviewed article is an abstract, or summary, of the article. Use the abstract to:

- Identify the authors' research focus,
- Determine if the article is a primary or secondary resource, and
- Make a decision: Is this article useful for you?

Read Relevant Sections

Peer-reviewed articles are broken up into sections. If an article is useful for you, the next step is to identify and read only its most relevant sections – and skip the others! Headings make the sections easy to identify.

- **Introduction**
Read it. This states the research questions and researchers' rationale for conducting the study.
- **Literature Review**
Read it. It organizes and discusses existing research on the topic and puts the researchers' work in context. Sometime the literature review is folded into the introduction section.
- **Methodology**
Skip it. This discusses how the research was designed and conducted.
- **Results**
Skip it. It includes the uninterpreted results of the research.
- **Discussion**
Read it. This describes the researchers' interpretations of the results and answers the questions posed earlier in the article.
- **Conclusion**
Read it. It examines the research results in a larger context and describes what gaps are left to be filled.
- **References/Works Cited**
Read it. Look for additional relevant resources on your topic.



When to Read the Whole Article

When should you read the whole article, rather than just specific sections?

- The article is a literature review or meta-analysis (these articles are not broken up into sections);
- Your assignment requires you to design your own survey;
- You need to evaluate the research methods used;
- It is important that the populations studied are consistent across the literature.