

VIC171Y: Methodology, Theory & Practice in the Natural Sciences

Identifying the Best Sources

Scholarly Sources

Scholarly sources report on original research by experts in a particular academic discipline. Often they go through a peer-review process, which means that they are evaluated by reputable scholars in the field before they are published.

Scholarly and Popular Sources

Criteria for evaluating publications

Part	Questions to Ask
Author:	Who wrote it? Are they an scholar, journalist, or a writer? Does the author have credentials that qualify him or her to write knowledgeably on the topic?
Sources:	Does the author acknowledge his or her sources? How?
Content:	Is the content substantial? Does it appear to be valid and well-researched? Does it make sense, based on your own background knowledge, or what other articles have to say on the topic?
Writing:	Is the language scholarly? Is the article well written? Do illustrations and data support the content in a scholarly fashion, or do they appear to be attention-getting, or sensational?
Audience:	Who is the article written for? Is it written for experts and researchers in the field, or for members of the general public?
Journal:	Is it published in a scholarly journal or a popular magazine?
Publisher:	Is it published by a university press or a large commercial publisher (such as Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan, or Springer) that specializes in producing scholarly books?

Is the journal scholarly?

Is the article published in a scholarly journal? How would you find out?

Investigate the journal using these two strategies:

1. Visit the journal's website to learn more about the periodical.

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Is it published by a scholarly association such as the Canadian Sociological Association?

Is it published by a university press?

On the journal's website, look for the "about this journal" or "submission guidelines" section to learn about the publication's editorial policy.

2. Search the journal name in [Ulrichsweb](#) to determine if it is scholarly or peer-reviewed.

The black and white referee's shirt indicates that the journal is peer-reviewed.

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