

Evaluating Journal Articles

Refereed (or “peer reviewed”)

Make sure your articles come from refereed journals. Refereed journals are scholarly publications (not popular magazines). All the articles published in these journals have been rigorously examined for soundness, accuracy, significance to the profession, thorough literature reviews, and methodological sophistication of any research methods used. All articles have undergone a “blind review” process. An editorial board, made up of scholars in the field, reviews and edits all articles submitted to the journal and either rejects articles or accepts the articles (usually with recommendations for various changes). Most databases now allow users to **limit a search to refereed journals**. Look for and click on the limiter box “peer review.”

The Journal

- Did the article come from a scholarly journal (i.e., *Harvard Educational Review*) rather than a popular magazine (i.e., *Time*)?
- Is the journal “peer reviewed,” “refereed,” or “juried?” In other words, have the articles been reviewed by professionals in the field?
- Check the journal for a list of reviewers (editorial board).
- Do the submission guidelines mention a review process (usually located in the front or back cover)? Many journals list their Web address in the inside cover. Submission guidelines can usually be found there also.

The Author

- Are the author’s credentials listed?
- Is the author qualified to write about the topic? (Is he/she a professional in the field or associated with an academic institution?)

The Content of the Publication

- What type of publication is this?
- Viewpoint/opinion piece
An Article expressing the writer’s views/own perspectives. It often does not include a reference list.
- News piece/journalistic writing
Purpose of the article is to report news or current issues. It hardly ever includes a list of references.
- Scholarly article based on authorities in the field (as opposed to personal opinion)
An article based on works and findings of authorities in the field. The author has done their “homework” and a list of references is included.

Identifying Research Articles

The article is based on original research.

Usually includes the following components:

- Abstract
- Literature Review
- Theory or Background
- Methods
- Procedures
- Results/Findings
- Supporting diagrams, charts, figures, etc.
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Call for further research

Evaluating ERIC Documents

Because ERIC Documents include a large scope of work, of varying degrees of scholarliness, limit your use of ERIC Documents to high quality “research reports” or “evaluation studies.” The “publication type” section of the ERIC Document citation will indicate type of publication.

- **What type of publication is this?**
Report/Research, opinion piece, paper, conference proceeding, classroom guide, dissertation, pamphlet?
- **Who authored or sponsored the publication?**
- **Is there a scholarly or professional organization associated with the publication?**
- **If a conference proceeding or paper, where was it presented? When was it presented?**