

“What is a Scholarly Article?”

A scholarly article has been through the peer-review process.

Peer-review means that one or more experts in the field review articles submitted to the journal. The reviewers check the article for the quality and originality of research as well as adherence to editorial standards of the journal. After review, the reviewer can recommend that the article be sent back to the author for revisions, be rejected, or be accepted for publication.

Peer-review articles are also sometimes referred to as “refereed” or even just “reviewed.”

Many of the Randall Library databases provide a check box to help limit results to “peer-reviewed” content.

However, checking the “peer-reviewed” check box doesn’t mean that every result will be a peer-reviewed article.

Many peer-reviewed journals publish non-peer-reviewed content--such as editorials and book reviews.

So, how can you identify if the article you are using is a scholarly research article?

Use the “I’M RaD” acronym to help identify the parts of the article.

I = Introduction Why was the study undertaken? What was the research question, the tested hypothesis or the purpose of the research?

M = Methods When, where, and how was the study done? What materials were used or who was included in the study groups?

R = Results What answer was found to the research question? What did the study find? Was the tested hypothesis proven?

D = Discussion What might the answer imply and why does it matter? How does it fit in with what other researchers have found? What are the perspectives for future research?

Note that some journals won’t name the sections exactly the same--for example--sometimes ‘Discussion’ will be called ‘Conclusions’ and sometimes the order will be different.

Remember, not all peer-reviewed articles are research and so they may not follow the “I’M RAD” structure. For example, some peer-reviewed articles are literature reviews.

When in doubt, ask a librarian at library.uncw.edu/ask