



What is a scholarly source?

Different instructors and librarians will use different terminology for this category of sources: scholarly sources, academic journals, primary literature, or peer-reviewed articles. Scholarly literature is the umbrella term, and there are a few small distinctions between different types of scholarly literature. Let's start with what makes a source scholarly.

Scholarly Sources

A scholarly source is created by a scholar or researcher. The authors of these sources have usually spent a substantial amount of time conducting their own research as well as reviewing the research of other scholars in their field.

An example of this would be a team of health researchers who are focused on smoking cessation interventions in low-income counties in the United States. Scholarly research is usually very specific and narrow. In conducting their own research, these authors would also look to the "body of literature" on the topic. That means looking at the work of other researchers who are researching the same thing or similar things in order to find gaps in the research, connections, and links. Because they are referencing the work of others, sources will be cited. You will always find a References list at the end of a scholarly article. The articles often follow a formal structure, with labeled sections like Introduction, Data Sources, Methods, Findings, Discussion, and Conclusions. These labels will vary from one subject area to the next.



Characteristics of Scholarly Sources

The following are some of the characteristics of scholarly sources:



Expertise

Written by experts and scholars in a field for other scholars in the same field. These may be researchers, professors, or scientists.

Structure

Follow a formal structure that usually starts with an Abstract.

Vocabulary

Use specialized terminology that may be unfamiliar to undergraduate students, but will be familiar to other researchers in the field.

References

Contains a list of sources cited as well as in-text citations.

Examples

Scholarly articles are contained within journals that are usually narrowly focused on one very specific subject area. Some examples include:

- **Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health**
- **Analytical Chemistry**
- **Journal of Applied Psychology**
- **American Historical Review**
- **Journal of Educational Research**
- **Journal of Sociology**
- **American Economics Journal**



Where to Find Scholarly Sources

You can find scholarly and peer-reviewed sources through the library's online system, in databases, and on the free Web, using a search engine like Google. If you are not familiar, you can learn how to use these tools in the tutorial titled "How to Find Information."

EOU Library

-Databases, Primo-

The library subscribes to databases that contain scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles. Find them on the library website under "Databases."

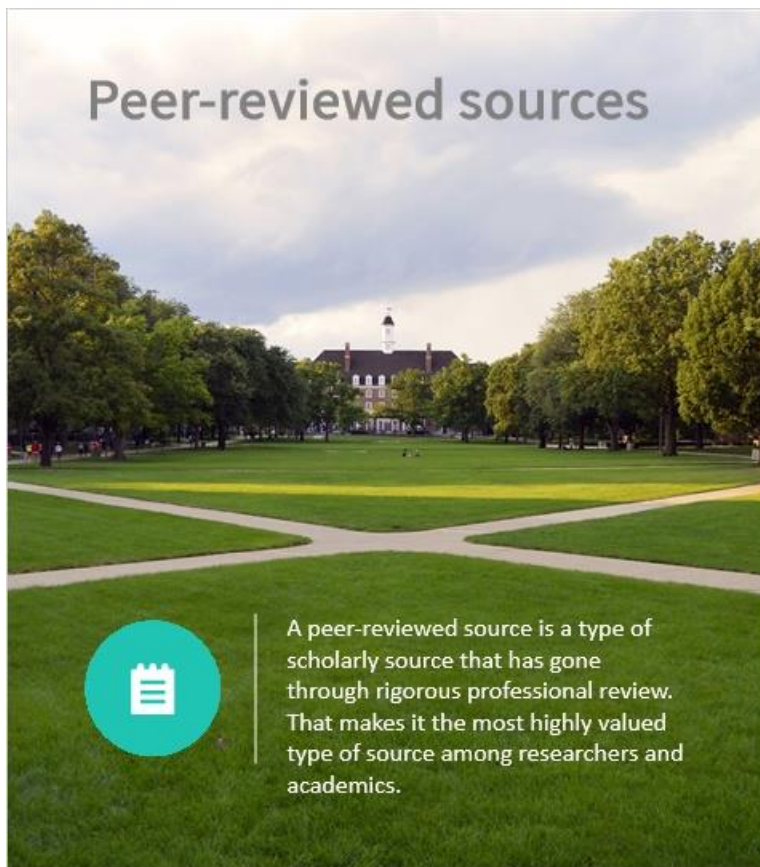
Free Web

-Google Scholar, Science.gov, USA.gov-

Google Scholar and these government search engines are freely accessible on the Web. Just use a search engine or browser to find them.



Peer-reviewed sources



A peer-reviewed source is a type of scholarly source that has gone through rigorous professional review. That makes it the most highly valued type of source among researchers and academics.

Characteristics of peer-reviewed sources

The characteristics of a peer-reviewed source are the same as those of scholarly sources, but in addition they have passed review by two or more experts in the field.

How can I tell if something is peer-reviewed?

The best way to determine if a journal is peer-reviewed is to check the journal's website. Google the journal title, and look for a "journal information" section. Databases often have a way to narrow to just peer-reviewed articles, but this limiter may not always be reliable.

Peer-Review Process

The process starts with a hypothesis or idea, and the researcher(s) will first search to find and understand what research has already been done on this idea or topic before outlining their own research plan.



Where to Find Peer-Reviewed Sources

You can find scholarly and peer-reviewed sources through the library's online system, in databases, and by using tools like Google Scholar. Be careful to ensure that the articles you choose do indeed come from peer-reviewed journals! You can confirm this by looking up the journal's website. Learn how to use these tools in the tutorial, "How to Find Information."

EOU Library Databases

The library subscribes to databases that contain scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles. Find them on the library website under "Databases."

Google Scholar

Google Scholar is an easy-to-use index of scholarly books and articles. The full text of articles may not always be available, but the library can usually help you get it.

