

What is Peer Review?

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As part of your own research, it is important to show that you are engaged in the scholarly conversation in your subject area, and one way of doing that is by reading and citing articles from peer-reviewed journals. You may hear articles in these journals referred to as academic or scholarly articles as well, but peer review refers to the specific process the articles goes through to be published in one of these journals.

The process starts with the submission of a research paper to a journal. The editor checks the quality of the paper and determines if the paper fits the scope of the journal before sending it out for review. If so, they pass it on to two or three other reviewers. These reviewers are other experts within the same discipline who have the necessary knowledge to determine whether the paper offers original, quality research. They read the paper, make comments and suggestions, and recommend to the editor whether the paper should be accepted, rejected, or revised. If there are revisions to be made, those are sent to the author, who can then resubmit their article for further review after making the necessary changes. Once a paper is accepted, it is published and available to read.

This process takes time, and can sometimes mean that research is published many months after it's been submitted, but the careful consideration of each paper is what helps ensure its quality.

However, it's important to remember that this process isn't fool-proof. Just because an article has gone through peer-review does not mean you can automatically assume it is perfect. You should still evaluate each article just as you would any other piece of information, especially since quality can vary between journals and the scholarly conversation continues well after publication. Peer-reviewed articles can be and have been critiqued, or, in extreme cases, outright retracted, so always keep a critical eye on what you read.

Not all academic journals have a peer-review process. If you want to confirm whether a research article is peer-reviewed, you will want to research the journal's publication process. You can do this by investigating the journal website online or on the Ulrichsweb database available through the UH Library library's website. Many other academic databases also have features that allow you to limit search results to peer-reviewed articles.

As you start you to look for peer-reviewed articles for your research, you can always reach out to the UH Libraries for help.