

# How to Evaluate Journal Articles

The chart below provides key elements to assist you in evaluating a journal article.

<p><b>Purpose of the Article:</b> Why was the article written?</p>	<p>To persuade? To inform? To prove something?</p>
<p><b>Type of Journal:</b> For college level research Information should be obtained mostly from scholarly journals.</p>	<p>-Scholarly Journals – contain articles describing <i>high quality</i> research that has been reviewed by experts in the field. -Trade Magazines – may be useful for topics in business or where economic data is needed. They are also good for learning what current “hot topics” are in an area. -Popular Magazine – Should be used sparingly, or not at all.</p>
<p><b>Organization &amp; Content</b></p>	<p>-Is the material organized and focused? -Is the argument or presentation understandable? -Is this original research, a review of previous research, or an informative piece?</p>
<p><b>Bias:</b> Some publications have an inherent bias that will impact articles printed in them.</p>	<p><b>Is the journal:</b> Left/Liberal? Right/Conservative? Center? An alternative press? Published by a political action (PAC) group?</p>
<p><b>Date of Article:</b> Know the time needs of your topic and examine the timeliness of the articles.</p>	<p><b>Is the article:</b> Up-to-date, Out-of-date, Timeless?</p>
<p><b>Bibliography:</b> Scholarly works always contain a bibliography of resources that were consulted. This reference list should be in sufficient quantity and appropriate for the content.</p>	<p><b>Look for:</b> -If the bibliography exists, -If the bibliography is short or long, -If the bibliography is selective or comprehensive, -If the references are primary sources (ex. Journal articles) or only secondary sources (ex. Encyclopedias), -If the citation style is clear and consistent.</p>

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<p><b>Usefulness:</b> Is the article relevant to the current research project?</p>	<p><b>If it is a useful article does it:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Support an argument</li> <li>-Refute an argument</li> <li>-Give examples (survey results, primary research finding, case studies)</li> <li>-Provide “wrong” information that can be challenged or disagreed with productively</li> </ul>
<p><b>Authority:</b> Is the author(s) and/or publisher(s) credentials verifiable.</p>	<p>Is the author an expert in this field? Where is the author employed? What else has he/she written?</p>
<p><b>Scope/Coverage:</b> Does the article cover the topic comprehensively, partially, or provide an overview?</p>	
<p><b>Audience:</b> For what type of reader is the author writing? This relates to the type of publication (i.e. journal, magazine, trade publication).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-General reader (<i>popular magazine</i>),</li> <li>-Students (high school, college, graduate),</li> <li>-Specialists or professional (<i>trade magazines</i>),</li> <li>-Researchers or scholars (<i>scholarly journals</i>)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Illustrations:</b> Are charts, graphs, maps, photographs used to illustrate concepts? Are the illustrations relevant? Are they clear and professional-looking?</p>	

