

# Choosing a Peer-Reviewed Online Journal

## Why Choose a Peer-Reviewed Journal?

Not all online information is created equal. The kind of information students should seek to support their scholarly/academic papers is information that is backed by someone's "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval," otherwise known as online journals that practice "peer review."

Peer review means that the material contained in an online source, usually an online journal, has been reviewed by other experts in the field and has been deemed by those experts to be sound, reliable, and print-worthy. Online information that does not come from journals or other sources practicing peer review should be viewed skeptically and may include these examples of "non-peer-review" online sources:

- Personal websites (even if the person sponsoring the website is a professor or expert)
- Online journals not practicing peer review
- Organizations' websites (even if the name of the organization sounds impressive and scholarly)
- Chat room comments
- Online news services
- College or university websites that may publish articles of interest
- Popular magazines (those published for the general public)
- Independent experts (possibly lone-wolves and mavericks)

## Using Search Engines to Select Peer-Reviewed Journals

The easiest way to ensure that you are using a peer-reviewed journal is to use an academic search engine that will limit the type of articles retrieved to include only those that are peer reviewed. The library at Montana State University-Billings offers such a service through its website, <http://msubillings.edu/library>.

To access peer-reviewed journals from the library's website, click on "Articles." A page will then appear listing several search engines.

When you choose *Expanded Academic*, *Health Reference Center-Academic*, or *Business & Company ASAP*, you will have the option to limit the search by checking the box marked "Limit the current search to refereed publications (scholarly/academic publications)." If you choose *Academic Search Premier* or *Business Source Premier*, you can limit the search by selecting the box "Scholarly (Peer-reviewed) Journals."

By using the search engines and limiting your search to peer-reviewed or refereed journals, you will find the necessary, peer-reviewed sources you need. You can then complete your scholarly/academic paper using appropriate sources for university-level writing and research.

## Determining if a Journal is Peer Reviewed

If you choose to search for a peer-reviewed journal on your own or would like to use a source but are not sure if it is peer-reviewed, you can check to see if the journal adheres to a peer review process by following three simple steps.

1. Locate the source's home page.
2. Look for and click on a link labeled "submissions," "for authors" or something similar that outlines the submission, review and publication guidelines.
3. Read through the procedural description for any mention of "peer review" as part of the process. If it is mentioned, the journal is peer-reviewed. If it is not stated as part of the publishing procedures, the journal is not peer-reviewed.

Taking the time to locate and select peer-reviewed sources will improve the quality of your research. It is the first step on the path to completing a quality, university-level research paper.