Why use peer-reviewed articles?

Journal articles are an important source to use in assignments as they include current scholarly information, can focus on specific topics, and have reference lists that lead to other sources. Peer-reviewed (aka ‘refereed’) articles go through an editorial process that involves review and approval by the author’s peers (people who are experts in the same subject area). This improves the overall quality of the article.

Using good quality sources is key to undertaking university-level research - studies published in peer-reviewed journals tend to be more reliable. Assignments also often specify that students need to use peer-reviewed articles (aka "scholarly resources" in lecturer-speak), so knowing how to access them is key to getting a good mark.

Articles can be limited to peer-reviewed journal sources in the Library catalogue (NewCat+) and in some databases (e.g. EBSCO and ProQuest). Journals can be checked for peer-review status using Ulrichsweb, detailed below.

Using Ulrichsweb to check for peer-review

Ulrichsweb is a directory of information about journals published around the world, and can be found under ‘Databases by title’, or via a Library catalogue (NewCat+) search. In addition to title, publisher and ISSN information, Ulrichsweb includes the peer-review status of research articles published in the journal.

Note: Ulrichsweb uses 'Refereed' for peer review. These terms are interchangeable (i.e. refereed = peer-reviewed).

To search Ulrichsweb, enter the name of the journal into the search box. Note that searching needs to be done by the journal title, not by the article title.

Results from the search will display. To identify if research articles from the journal are peer-reviewed, look for the black-and-white referee's jacket icon, highlighted below:

In the results shown above, we can see that the journal ‘Rehabilitation Psychology’ is peer-reviewed (has the referee icon), but the journal 'Rehabilitation' isn't (missing the referee icon).

By clicking on the title link for the journal, we can also view the journal’s full information, including a clearer status of peer-review:

Note that if the journal is not peer-reviewed, this section will be missing from the record. Ulrichsweb does not include a display option for 'No' under Refereed.

Need further assistance?