

Evaluating Online Articles: A Checklist



University Libraries ♦ www.lib.umd.edu/tl/guides/evaluating-articles-checklist

Why evaluate online articles? You might think that because you found an article in one of the Libraries' online databases, it is undoubtedly a scholarly source. However, just because the Libraries subscribe to these databases does not automatically make the sources within them scholarly. It is important to always evaluate your sources carefully before choosing to include them in a paper. This checklist will provide basic criteria for the evaluation of online articles.

Directions:

1. Carefully read through and answer each question directly on this form.
2. After filling out the page print it.
3. Attach a printout of the first page of the web site you are evaluating to this checklist and hand the packet in to your professor.

What is the title of the article you are evaluating?

What is the title of the article?

Authority and Publication Information

Both the author and the publisher information are important criteria to look at in determining whether an article is scholarly or not. Consider the authority of the article and what qualifications the author has to write on this subject. Information about the author can often be found in the article itself, while publication information can be found in the database record by clicking the journal title.

Who is the author of the article?

The author is:

I could not find this information.

Does the publication information say that the journal has been peer-reviewed?

Yes, the journal my article is in has been peer-reviewed.

No, the journal my article is in has not been peer-reviewed.

I could not find this information.

Is the publisher a university, scholarly association, or scholarly society?

Yes. The publisher is:

No.

I couldn't tell.

Purpose and Content

Consider why this article was written. This will help you put the article's ideas in context and help you identify any biases. Is the information mostly subjective, objective, or is it a mix of the two? Abstracts are good indicators of scholarly sources and good places to look to get an idea of the article's purpose. Also think about the intended audience; scholarly articles are written by experts for other experts and scholars in the field for which they are writing. The language of an article can help you determine the intended audience.

Does your article include an abstract

Yes.

No.

What is the purpose of this article? *Check all that apply:*

Present an overview of a topic

Entertainment

To persuade

To instruct

To inform

Other – please explain:

What kind of information does the article provide? *Check one:*

Balanced, objective or factual information

Biased, subjective or opinionated statements

Are the arguments well supported? Yes No

Both objective and subjective information

I couldn't tell

Other – please explain:

Who is the article's intended audience?

The general public

Academics, scholars, or experts in the field

I couldn't tell

Please explain how you determined the article's intended audience:

Accuracy

Scholarly works cite their sources. Any source that an author quotes, references, or paraphrases needs to be given credit. Citing sources gives the work credibility. It lets other scholars check the information in the source and supports any arguments the author makes in the work.

Which of the following citation techniques are included in your article? *Check all that apply:*

Footnotes

Works cited list

Reference list

Bibliography

I couldn't find this information.

Other – please explain: