What is a peer-reviewed journal?

A “peer-reviewed journal” or “refereed journal” is a scholarly periodical which requires that each article submitted for publication be judged by an independent panel of experts (scholarly or scientific peers). Articles not approved by a majority of these peers are not accepted for publication by the journal.

Peer-reviewed journals can often be identified immediately by:
- Their editorial statements or instructions to authors (usually in first few pages of the journal or at the end).
- By consulting Ulrichsweb (available on the library’s database page—"By Name").
- In some databases, publication information is available.*

When searching full-text databases by providers such as ProQuest, Gale and EBSCO, a search can be limited to scholarly or peer-reviewed sources simply by checking a box on the search screen or clicking on the appropriate tab showing your search results.*

Other common characteristics of scholarly, peer-reviewed, or academic journals:
- Formal in format.
- Sources are cited with footnotes or a bibliography at the end of the article.
- Authors are scholars and researchers in the field and are identified as such.
- Purpose of the article is to publish the results of research.
- Publisher may be a professional organization or research institution, usually not-for-profit.
- No or very little advertising.
- Graphics are usually statistical illustrations, in black-and-white.

*For help in locating this information, please ask a Reference Librarian.