

How to Read a Scholarly Article in Education

Instructions and Exercise

How do you know if the journal is scholarly? Not all periodicals in research databases are scholarly. Follow these criteria:

Scholarly journals:

- always cite their sources with in-text cites or footnotes, as well as a references or “works cited” list at the end of every article
- usually publish quarterly or less often, although some are more frequent
- this usually can’t be seen if you only view them online, but they rarely contain glossy pages, colorful pictures, or advertising. They look very black and white and serious
- articles are written by scholars in the field, with recognized academic credentials in the field that the journal covers
- the purpose of a scholarly journal is to report on original research or experiments so that other scholars can use that information to improve their own research. It is assumed that the contents of scholarly journals have not been influenced by advertising or less obvious bias by special interests
- most scholarly journals are published by an organization of professionals in that field, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) which publishes many journals in the fields of psychology, mental health, and counseling

What isn’t a scholarly journal? What isn’t acceptable for academic papers?

Weekly or monthly magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *New Republic*, or *National Review*; and newspapers such as *The New York Times*, can be good sources of news or opinion on current issues, but they are not written by scholars in a field, do not cite their sources, and are not intended for academic research. Advertisers and other special interests may influence the contents and opinions in these magazines. You may use these occasionally for current factual information and opinion.

If unsure if an article is scholarly, ask your instructor or a reference librarian.

How to read a scholarly article critically: As you read, finish the sentence for each point:

- ***The main purpose of this article is . . .*** [State as accurately as possible the author’s purpose for writing the article. In order to demonstrate the author’s purpose you will have to furnish some background information on the topic so you may need to consult your textbook about the topic]
- ***The key question that the author is asking is . . .*** [Figure out the key question in the mind of the author when he/she wrote the article]
- ***The most important information in this article is/concerns . . .*** [Identify the facts, data, or resources the author uses to support his/her argument. To expand on this statement you will have to look at the foot or endnotes]
- ***The main conclusion[s]/inference[s] in this article is/are . . .*** [Identify the key conclusions the author comes to and presents in the article]

- **The main assumptions underlying the author's thinking are . . .** [Think about what the author is assuming to be true and what might be questioned. To expand on this statement you will need to think about the larger context of the topic]
- **If we accept the author's line of reasoning, the implications are . . .** [What consequence does the author's argument have on our understanding of current research and/or theory?]
- **If we reject the author's line of reasoning, the implications are . . .** [What consequence does rejecting the author's argument have on our understanding of current research and theory?]
- **When writing this article, the author's point of view may have been influenced by . . .** [Scholars are influenced by events that occurred during the time when they wrote; by personal prejudices; or by hidden agendas, such as pressure from those who paid them to do the research.]

The answers to these questions are often found in the first 2-3 pages and the last 2-3 pages, so read these first. Reading these pages can give you the "big picture" of what the author is trying to say, so you can then read the full article and determine for yourself whether he or she has done an adequate job of supporting their thesis.

An Exercise in Reading a Scholarly Article Critically

- Find an appropriate scholarly article that interests you and is relevant to your research topic.
- Use each of the points above as the first sentence of an expanded paragraph on that particular point. Be sure to include the bibliographic citation for the article in APA format.

Where to find a scholarly journal article:

- in the databases EBSCOhost or Wilson Select Plus in Cambridge College Online Library.
- in a print scholarly journal, most likely found in a traditional library

Recommended Scholarly Journals in Education to be found in EBSCOhost or Wilson Select Plus Research Databases in the Cambridge College Online Library:

- FT-ASP means it is available in full-text in the EBSCOhost database, Academic Search Premier
- FT-W means it is available in full-text in Wilson Select Plus Database
- Some journals do not release their most recent issues online. Use WorldCat database to find which local library has recent print issues.
- C-ASP means it is citation-only in EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier. In an EBSCOhost result, click WorldCat to find which local library has the print version.

<i>American Journal of Education</i>	FT-ASP
<i>American School and University</i>	FT-ASP
<i>British Journal of Educational Studies</i>	FT-ASP (not last 12 months)
<i>Childhood Education</i>	C-ASP
<i>Clearing House</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Contemporary Education</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Education</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Education Digest</i>	FT-ASP (not last 2 months)
<i>Education Week</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Educational Forum</i>	FT-W
<i>Educational Horizons</i>	FT-W

<i>Educational Leadership</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Educational Policy</i>	C-ASP
<i>Educational Studies</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Elementary School Journal</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Gender and Education</i>	FT-ASP (not last 3 months)
<i>Harvard Educational Review</i>	C-ASP
<i>High School Journal</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Independent School</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Initiatives</i>	FT-W
<i>Instructor</i>	FT-ASP
<i>International Review of Education</i>	C-ASP
<i>Issues in Education</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Journal of Education</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Journal of Education for Teaching</i>	FT-ASP (not last 3 months)
<i>Mailbox Teacher</i>	C-ASP
<i>Peabody Journal of Education</i>	FT-W
<i>Phi Delta Kappan</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Research Papers in Education</i>	FT-ASP (not last 12 months)
<i>Sociology of Education</i>	C-ASP
<i>Teacher Educator</i>	FT-W
<i>Teachers College Record</i>	FT-ASP (not last 12 months)
<i>Teaching Education</i>	FT-W to 2000
<i>Teaching Pre K-8</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Theory Into Practice</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Urban Education</i>	C-ASP

Research in Education journals:

<i>American Educational Research Journal</i>	FT-W
<i>Applied Measurement in Education</i>	FT-ASP (not last 12 months)
<i>Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis</i>	FT-W
<i>Educational Research</i>	FT-ASP (not last 12 months)
<i>Educational Research Quarterly</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Educational Researcher</i>	FT-W
<i>Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics</i>	FT-W
<i>Journal of Educational Measurement</i>	C-ASP
<i>Journal of Educational Research</i>	FT-ASP
<i>Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development</i>	FT-ASP

This handout was closely adapted from a webpage posted by Ed Byerly of The Victoria College. His original webpage can be viewed at <http://www.victoriacollege.edu/~ebyerly/ArtCrit.htm>
Byerly credited the statements in the criteria for reading a scholarly article as an adaptation from *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools* by Richard Paul and Linda Elder.

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