

Guidelines for Using Peer-Reviewed Articles in Written Work

Some assignments require the incorporation of outside sources beyond the course texts. For example, case studies in some classes require at least **2 peer-reviewed sources/articles**.

What is a peer-reviewed (or refereed) source?

According to Wikipedia, “Peer review (also known as refereeing) is the process of subjecting an author's scholarly work, research, or ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the same field. Peer review requires a community of experts in a given (and often narrowly defined) field, who are qualified and able to perform impartial review.”

How peer-review works

Let's say a researcher does a study and finds that vitamin C cures the common cold. She'd like to get her results out to other scientists, doctors, and academic professionals. In order to get it published, the editor of the journal must approve it and determine that it was “good science”. However, because an editor can't process all of the journal submissions him/herself, and, because this may not be the editor's specific area of focus, the editor sends the article to a few (usually 3) peers (that is, experts) with the field to determine if the researcher followed good scientific practices.

Why is peer review important?

For example, let's say my car mechanic tells me I need a new transmission. Given my knowledge of car operations is close to zero, I'm at his mercy for his diagnosis, analysis, and cure for my car. Now, being a savvy shopper, I'll take my car to 2-3 other car repair places before making this kind of investment decision. Peer review works in a similar way. Because no one person can be an expert in so many disciplines, peer review allows the editor to determine if the author of the article is making accurate analyses and interpretations; essentially, peer reviewed articles build in a certain amount of quality.

Are all written documents peer-reviewed?

No, actually, only a very narrow range of published articles are peer reviewed. Today, anyone can self-publish a book or blog. While this greatly enhances accessibility and diverse expression of ideas, there is no assurance of quality. For opinions, there is no need for peer review. When it comes to academic and scientific writing, peer review is important for ensuring quality. It should be noted that most books, even those about academic concepts, are not peer-reviewed; primarily journal articles are the main source of peer-reviewed materials.

How do I find peer reviewed articles?

There are several ways:

- The best way is using National University's online library, search the full-text databases such as InfoTrac, ProQuest, and EBSCO, and the search itself can be limited to peer-reviewed or refereed sources simply by checking a box on the search screen.
- Note that the journals cited on the last page of our course syllabus, except for *Harvard Business Review*, are all peer-reviewed.

Other common characteristics of peer-reviewed, or refereed sources:

- 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, a new theory or concept
- Publisher may be a professional organization, research institution; usually not-for-profit
- Very little advertising
- Graphics are usually statistical illustrations, in black-and-white

Types of peer-reviewed sources

1. Review Articles

What is a Review Article

A review article is a summary and critical analysis of an area (e.g., Autism, Capital Punishment, Transformational Leadership) by an expert in the field. The article usually provides some background history, recent findings, theories, and directions for future research.

2. Case Studies

What is a case study?

A case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves. A form of qualitative descriptive research, the case study looks intensely at an individual or small participant pool, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group and only in that specific context. Researchers do not focus on the discovery of a universal, generalizable truth, nor do they typically look for cause-effect relationships; instead, emphasis is placed on exploration and description (Writing Guide, Case Study, 2007).

3. Research Studies

What are research Studies?

Research articles are published by scientists or researchers who want to make the results of their work known. Research articles usually include a summary of the research, a description of the research, how it was carried out, and the results (Glossary of Scientific Literature, 2009).

Other types of sources

Most sources outside of journal articles will not be peer-reviewed. Examples of these non-peer reviewed sources include:

- *Time* Magazine or any magazine
- Someone's blog or anything on the internet
- A textbook or any book
- Something someone said on the news, a talk or radio show
- *The New York Times* Newspaper, or, any newspaper

Citing your sources and your paper format

Try to work on using an equal distribution of all three of these peer-reviewed sources to help enhance your assignments. These sources should not only support your arguments, but raise some provoking arguments and discussions to increase your understanding and analysis.

For each outside source that you cite, **even if it is not peer-reviewed**, you need to reference it within the body of your response. The citation methods are a bit tricky as they are different for different sources so it is best to refer to the 6th Edition of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (2010), the NU APA Guide, Google APA citation guidelines, or contact the NU Writing Center to determine the correct citation method given a particular source. For your submitted papers (e.g., reflective essays, case studies), you'll need to include a reference page and follow APA formatting guidelines

Student papers and assignments will be submitted in hard copy. All text must be double-spaced, use a Times New Roman 12-point font, left justified and include one inch margins.

References

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, DC: Author.