**What is a Scholarly Article and Why is it Important?**

A scholarly article is a short document, written by an expert, for other experts, to communicate new information. The peer review process is what makes these documents special. Before a scholarly article gets published, a group of other experts read the article and decide whether it contains good ideas, sound methods, and accurate research. This is not to say that low quality articles don't get through. On rare occasion they do, but for today let's just pretend that everything is right in the world.

So, why is it important you find one of these?

Well, first of all, it’s required. Your assignment requires you to find one, summarize it, and present it to the class. So that will be kind of hard if you don’t know what it is.

Apart from your assignment, scholarly articles are sources of high-quality information. Not like what you find on about.com, ask.com. Those are good for learning how to cook a mean bowl of ramen noodles or extracting a demon from your gas tank, but less useful for learning about cancer breakthroughs. Scholarly articles are responsible for solving a number of the world’s problems. Even if they were not so useful, you will still have to use these throughout your college career, no matter your major. So there is no getting around them.

So now that you're sold on scholarly articles, you should probably know what they look like.

The look or makeup of a scholarly article varies by discipline. For the sciences, they are broken into sections, each with its own purpose:

First, the **abstract** which is a summary of the article. Yes, you still have to read the whole article. On its own, the abstract won't give you enough information to work with.

The **introduction** provides background on the article's topic. If an article were a joke, this would be the set up. A prostitute and nun walk into a bar. That sort of thing.

**Methods and materials**. If the article is about an experiment or study, this part goes into all the gritty details. In an experiment designed to measure rodent attitudes toward American political systems, this section would discuss the method (how the experiment was carried out), and the materials, (what was used)

The **results** discuss what was learned, followed by the **conclusion** or **discussion**, which describes the implications of the study, what might have gone wrong, and what this means for the future. The article ends with a **references** section that contains a list of the books and whatnot mentioned in the article.

So remember: scholarly articles are sources of high-quality information that will help you get good grades. If you read them.