Finding Primary Research Articles in the Sciences

How to tell if an article is primary research?

- The authors are the people who ran the experiment
- The article explains exactly how the authors did the research (Materials and Methods section) and has an explanation of results
- It is NOT a review. What’s a review? A review is an analysis of work that has been done by other people. Entire publications, such as Annual Reviews, may be based on review articles.

Other things to check:

- Ensure that references are present
- Ensure the article is peer-reviewed
  - Visit the Peer-Review Subject Guide for a description
  - You can make sure you are retrieving peer-reviewed articles by limiting your results to “peer-review” in some databases.

Still not sure?

- Look at the biology subject guide on the JMU library website for a link on “How to read a scientific article.”
- Ask your librarian for help! We’re available by chat, email, phone or in person. Explore the Library website at www.lib.jmu.edu