

Peer Review

Some Definitions:

Blind Peer Review (Single Blind Peer Review) -- The author of the article is unaware of who the reviewers or referees are. The reviewers might be familiar with the author or they might not have any knowledge of the author.

Double Blind Peer Review -- Neither the author nor the reviewers are known to each other. The idea here is that the reviewers' assessments of the article will be less subject to bias because the author is unknown. Note, however, that some publications have dispensed with the double blind review process since it is so easy to locate information on authors who are involved in research in specific areas and since the process drives up the administrative costs of publishing. It can be argued, however, that double blind review levels the playing field for women and for authors affiliated with less prestigious academies.¹

Peer Review -- Also called "refereeing," the process of submitting an article to a panel of experts for review prior to making a publishing decision.

More About the Process

The peer review process is utilized by a majority of academic journals and, in some cases, for book chapters. Simply put, peer review reflects an evaluative approach to selecting materials for inclusion in journals and books based on professional review. The process might also be referred to as refereeing. Peers, in this case, are professionals and experts who have an intimate familiarity with the subject matter being explored in the article or chapter. These are the author's "peers," those who also are heavily engaged within the profession or academic discipline for which the author is writing.

The ideas behind peer review include the following:

- Articles and chapters selected for publications are subjected to professional scrutiny by those best suited to judge the materials.
- Only the best articles and chapters will be selected for publication.
- Outside reviewers will bring little or no bias into the selection process.
- Literature that is of considerable consequence to the discipline is more likely to be published.
- Shortcomings are more likely to be spotted and corrected before publication.
- The process of fact-checking is further enhanced.



In every profession, one of the major concerns is that the field's literature reflects cutting edge and important research. The peer review process is one of the means for the discipline's experts to weigh in on the importance of work being produced by others in the discipline.

Not all academic publications use the peer review process. Some publications might utilize their own editors or even a single editor to screen articles being considered for publication. This does not necessarily take away from the importance of the publication or its legitimacy as a valid academic source.

¹Jaschik, S. (2011, May 31). Rejecting double blind. *Inside Higher Ed*. Available from http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/05/31/american_economic_association_abandons_double_blind_journal_reviewing

Reading by Jim Alderman. Updated March 2014.