Open Access journals make articles freely available online, permitting users to read, redistribute or reuse content. Reuse rights are often defined by Creative Commons licenses.

Open Access journals have been proliferating rapidly. Many are high-quality, peer-reviewed publications, but the ease and anonymity of internet publishing have also facilitated the growth of journals that engage in unprofessional or unethical practices. The following quality indicators are intended to provide guidance in evaluating publication venues or responding to invitations to serve as an editor or reviewer.

No single criterion below indicates whether or not a publication is reputable, but the balance of positive and negative indicators may inform the evaluation. Please contact your subject specialist librarian for more help evaluating journals in your discipline.

Positive Indicators

- Scope of the journal is well-defined and clearly stated
- Journal’s primary audience is researchers/practitioners
- Editor, editorial board are recognized experts in the field
- Journal is affiliated with an established scholarly or academic institution
- Articles are within the scope of the journal and meet disciplinary standards
- Any publishing fees are clearly explained on the website
- Articles have DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers)
- Journal clearly indicates rights for use and re-use of articles at the article level (for instance, Creative Commons license)
- Journal has ISSN (International Standard Serial Number, such as 1234-5678)
- Publisher is a member of Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association or conforms to their code of conduct
- Journal is registered at UlrichsWeb Global Serials Directory
- Journal is registered in the Directory of Open Access Journals
- Journal is included in subject databases or indexes

Negative Indicators

- Journal website is difficult to locate or identify
- Publisher “About” information is absent on the journal’s website
- A single editor is listed and editorial board information is absent
- Publisher direct marketing (spamming) or advertising is obtrusive
- Instructions for authors are not available
- Information on peer review and copyright is absent or unclear
- Journal scope statement is absent or extremely vague
- The journal does not provide information about the publisher or clearly indicate a mission to disseminate research content
- Repeat lead authors in the same issue
- Publisher has a negative reputation (documented examples in The Chronicle of Higher Education or list-servs)

Note: The indicators are adapted from those provided by Grand Valley State University Libraries.