What's a Scientific Article?

You might be required to find scientific articles for a variety of classes. Often, your instructors will require that you find articles that are reporting original research. You will want the original scientific report, including the information you would need if you were going to replicate the experiment or study. But sometimes these articles can be difficult to find and identify.

**Characteristics of Most Scientific Articles**

First, let's look at how to identify an article reporting scientific findings. Take a brief look at the article. In general, scientific articles:

- Are often 10 pages or longer
- Include technical and specialized language
- Are likely to be challenging to read and to require looking up terminology
- Have lengthy bibliographies at the end

If an article is only 2 pages long, has no references (bibliography), and you understand it without concentrating and perhaps looking up some of the words, then it is not presenting scientific research. It's just talking about it.

If your article looks good so far, then take a closer look. Most scientific research is divided into distinct, easily recognizable sub-sections. Here are some of the subheadings to look for:

- Summary or Abstract
- Introduction
- Materials and Methods (or Methodology)
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusions
- Acknowledgements
- References

If the article has three or more of these subheadings, then it almost certainly is an article presenting original scientific research.