Understanding Peer-Review

Most scholarly articles are peer-reviewed. For an article to be considered peer-reviewed the article needs to go through the following process:

- The authors/researchers submit their article to a journal editor.
- The journal editor reviews the article to make sure it is appropriate for the journal. For example if the journal is on brain science the editor will not accept an article on plant ecology.
- The journal editor sends the article out to three other scientists working in the same area as the authors. The three other scientists read through the article to see if it seems logical, if there something important the author did not address, if the procedures the author followed seem appropriate, if the article interesting, if the article is something other researchers would want to read, etc.

  The reviewers have three response options regarding the articles:
  1 – the article is great, please publish it
  2 – the article is okay, some things need to be changed before publishing it
  3 – the article is bad, do not publish it.

The reviewers’ choices can be reflected in article status statement/peer review statement. These statements can appear either near the beginning of the article or at the end of the article. Here are 2 examples

**Received 22 December 2009; revised 27 February 2010; accepted 21 April 2010.**
(To this article the reviewers said the article was good, but that some things needed to be changed before publication.)

**Received 19 September 1986; accepted 24 November 1986.**
(To this article the reviewers said the article was great, please publish it. This kind of statement is really rare.)

Please note that the reviewers do not perform the author’s experiment again. As a result some articles after publication may be found to be incorrect or invalid. Once scientists repeat the experiment they will see if the original researcher’s results and conclusions hold up.

Also, when searching databases frequently you can check a box to have your search results limited to only peer-reviewed articles. Doing this limits you to articles from journals, which contain peer-reviewed articles, but often not all the articles from the journal are peer-reviewed. You need to look at each article individually to make sure it is peer-reviewed.