

Trace the requirement to the source that controls it.

An instructor-ready lesson for teaching researchers how to verify one journal submission decision across official journal, publisher, and society pages.

20 minutes core lesson

10 or 45 minutes adaptations

Graduate and researcher level

No account required

01

Find authority

Identify which organization and page owns the decision.

02

Record evidence

Capture the source, access date, and a careful paraphrase.

03

Act with limits

Separate the next action from what remains unresolved.

What learners produce

One auditable decision record that a coauthor or research-support professional can reopen, check, and update.

Manusights Research

Journal Submission Source Map | Version 1.8 | Teaching kit revised 10 September 2026 | CC BY 4.0

manusights.com/research/journal-source-map/teaching-kit

Begin with an observable outcome, not a tour of a website.

By the end of the session, a learner should be able to demonstrate all three outcomes below using one real submission decision.

LOCATE

Name the owner

Choose an official source appropriate to the decision and explain why it has authority in that context.

DISTINGUISH

Separate claim from action

Record what the source states separately from the researcher's interpretation and planned action.

PRESERVE

Keep uncertainty visible

Document contradictions, inaccessible pages, or missing instructions without manufacturing certainty.

Why the activity is structured this way

DESIGN SOURCE	HOW IT CHANGES THE LESSON
ACRL Framework Authority is contextual	Learners must justify why a page controls a specific decision. They do not label one website as universally authoritative.
Backward design Outcome, evidence, activity	The finished decision record is the evidence of learning. The timed search is practice toward that record.
Formative assessment Brief, low-stakes check	A four-criterion rubric lets the facilitator diagnose source choice, attribution, reasoning, and uncertainty.

Teaching basis: Association of College and Research Libraries, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education; Yale Poorvu Center, Preparing for Class: Principles and Frameworks. Links and full citations appear on page 7.

A complete 20-minute facilitation plan.

Prepare in five minutes

- Open the live Source Map.
- Print one four-page workbook per learner or pair.
- Ask learners to bring a target journal, if they have one.
- Keep the PLOS ONE worked example available as a fallback.

Say this at the start

"A search result can point us toward an answer, but it does not preserve who owns the rule. Today we will build a record that another researcher can verify."

Boundary: The live official page controls. The Source Map only helps locate and classify the evidence path.

0-3 min	Model	Show one journal information page, one submission-guidelines page, and one policy or editorial page. Ask: "Which question can each page actually settle?"
3-5 min	Choose	Each learner writes one decision: fit, article type, manuscript package, review model, disclosure, or contribution criteria.
5-12 min	Trace	Learners open two or three official pages and record owner, page title, URL, access date, and the exact decision each page settles.
12-16 min	Synthesize	They paraphrase the controlling evidence, state a planned action, and mark any unresolved edge.
16-19 min	Peer audit	A partner checks whether the source is official, the claim is supported, and interpretation is visibly separate.
19-20 min	Exit check	Learners circle one rubric level and name the next person or source that could resolve remaining uncertainty.

Facilitator success test

A learner succeeds when the record is reproducible. Finding a plausible answer without preserving the source path is not enough.

WORKED EXAMPLE

PLOS ONE: Can a systematic review be submitted?

This example shows why a single page is not enough. It uses current public PLOS ONE pages checked on 10 September 2026.

OFFICIAL SOURCE	WHAT IT SETTLES	EVIDENCE TO RECORD
Journal Information PLOS ONE	Broad subject scope and the types of work the journal says it welcomes.	The journal lists systematic reviews when their methods support comprehensive and unbiased sampling of existing literature.
Criteria for Publication PLOS ONE	Editorial eligibility and the boundary around secondary literature.	The page excludes reviews generally, then identifies systematic reviews as a type it will consider when the methods meet the stated condition.
Submission Guidelines PLOS ONE	Preparation and reporting requirements for the manuscript package.	The guidelines route authors to study-type requirements and reporting expectations that must still be checked before submission.

Supported conclusion

A systematic review can be eligible, but the article type alone does not establish readiness. The review method and reporting package still need to satisfy the current official guidance.

Unresolved until checked

Whether a specific manuscript's search and selection methods meet the journal's standard. That judgment requires the manuscript and the current detailed study-type instructions.

Source trail

- 1. PLOS ONE, Journal Information: journals.plos.org/plosone/s/journal-information
- 2. PLOS ONE, Criteria for Publication: journals.plos.org/plosone/s/criteria-for-publication
- 3. PLOS ONE, Submission Guidelines: journals.plos.org/plosone/s/submission-guidelines

PLOS owns and may update these instructions. This example paraphrases the pages for teaching and does not replace them.

What a strong completed record contains.

WORKBOOK FIELD	MODEL ANSWER FOR THE PLOS ONE EXAMPLE
Decision	Is a systematic review an eligible PLOS ONE article type, and what remains to verify before submission?
Source owner	PLOS ONE, on the journal's official domain. Record the exact page title and URL for each part of the decision.
Evidence	The journal says it considers systematic reviews when their methods support comprehensive and unbiased sampling. Its criteria page distinguishes these from reviews it does not generally consider.
Interpretation	The manuscript may proceed to a method and reporting check. Eligibility should not be translated into a prediction of acceptance.
Uncertainty	The public pages do not establish whether this particular review's search, screening, and reporting are adequate.
Next action	Compare the manuscript against the current systematic-review and reporting instructions, record any mismatch, then ask the journal only if an official ambiguity remains.

The distinction to protect

"The journal considers this article type" is source-backed evidence. "This manuscript is ready" is a separate judgment that the sources alone cannot support.

Debrief prompts

Authority

Why are all three pages official while each controls a different part of the decision?

Contradiction

How would you record the apparent tension between the general exclusion of reviews and the stated systematic-review exception?

Change over time

Which details need an access date, and what would you recheck immediately before submission?

Transfer

What source roles would you expect at a journal hosted by a society or a large commercial publisher?

Score the record, not the confidence of the speaker.

Use this four-criterion formative rubric. A record is ready to share with a coauthor only when every row scores at least 2.

CRITERION	0 MISSING	1 PARTIAL	2 REPRODUCIBLE
Authority	No source, search snippet, or third-party summary.	Official page is present, but ownership or decision scope is unclear.	Official owner, page title, URL, access date, and decision scope are explicit.
Evidence	No source-backed statement.	Claim is vague, copied without context, or broader than the page supports.	Accurate paraphrase or brief quotation supports the exact decision.
Reasoning	Evidence and action are merged.	Action is stated, but the inference is hard to inspect.	Evidence, interpretation, and planned action are visibly separate.
Uncertainty	Gaps are hidden or guessed through.	A gap is named without an owner or next check.	Gap, consequence, and the source or person who can clarify it are recorded.

Common failure modes

The search-result answer

A snippet is treated as evidence. Ask the learner to open the result and record the responsible organization and page title.

The universal-authority answer

One publisher page is assumed to control every decision. Ask which question the page actually answers.

The copied-rule answer

A sentence is captured without a planned action. Ask what the evidence changes in the manuscript or workflow.

The false-certainty answer

A missing instruction becomes "not required." Ask the learner to preserve the gap and name the next verification step.

Make the lesson fit the room without weakening the evidence standard.

10 MINUTES

Demonstration

Use the PLOS ONE example. Learners identify which source controls one decision and complete only the peer-audit check.

20 MINUTES

Core lesson

Run the complete plan on page 3 using one learner-selected journal and one decision.

45 MINUTES

Comparison

Pairs trace the same decision for two journals, swap records, and explain where authority is organized differently.

Inclusive delivery

- Offer the tagged PDF and the equivalent HTML page. Do not require color interpretation.
- Let learners type, handwriting, dictate, or discuss the record while preserving the same evidence fields.
- Read URLs and page titles aloud when projecting. Avoid timed competition.
- Pair learners when publisher navigation, language, or access barriers make the search itself the dominant task.

Sources and reuse

1. Association of College and Research Libraries. *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework
2. Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning. *Preparing for Class: Principles and Frameworks*. poorvucenter.yale.edu
3. W3C Web Accessibility Initiative. *Ensuring correct tab and reading order in PDF documents*. w3.org/WAI/WCAG22/Techniques/pdf/PDF3
4. PLOS ONE. Journal Information; Criteria for Publication; Submission Guidelines. Accessed 10 September 2026.

License and attribution

Manusights original teaching material is licensed CC BY 4.0. Suggested attribution: "Journal Source Literacy teaching kit, Manusights, version 1.8." Preserve the canonical URL and version. Publisher content and trademarks remain with their owners.

Canonical resource: manusights.com/research/journal-source-map/teaching-kit

Dataset DOI: doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22215938