



Scholarly vs. Popular Journals



Does your professor want you to use scholarly journals?

Sometimes your professor will require you to use scholarly journals rather than popular journals for your research.

Scholarly journals provide more authoritative and subject-specific information, while popular journals (magazines) offer more general information.

Also referred to as “peer-reviewed” or “refereed,” scholarly journals can be difficult to identify.

How to tell the difference between the two types of journals:

Compare Content:	Scholarly Journals	Popular Journals
AUTHOR	Experts in the field	Staff writers or no author given
AUDIENCE	College students, professors, and scholars	General Public
ADS	Usually no or few advertisements	Lots of ads
APPEARANCE	Mostly text	Usually glossy photographs
ARTICLE TYPE	Substantial information	Brief articles
PUBLISHED BY?	Associations or Universities	Commercial firms
SOURCES CITED?	bibliography almost always given	Usually no bibliography given

Also, ask yourself these questions:

- Does the article list a bibliography?
- Is there an author given for the article?
- If so, are the author's credentials mentioned?
- Is the terminology specific to the subject area?
- Is the article based on either original research or experts in the field (as opposed to personal opinion)?

Examples of Scholarly Journals:

American Economic Review
Archives of Sexual Behavior
JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Assoc.
New England Journal of Medicine

Examples of Popular Magazines:

Business Week
CQ Researcher
Ebony
Health
Reader's Digest
Psychology Today
Sports Illustrated
Time

A scholarly article may follow, at least in part, the following outline:

1. introduction or literature review
2. theory or background
3. subjects
4. methods
5. results
6. discussion

Note: In many databases you can easily limit your search to just *scholarly* articles.

If you're not sure if you have a scholarly or popular journal, ask a reference librarian. You could also look in the reference books called Ulrich's (ask at the reference desk for this title).



Have questions? Contact Us:

1. **By Phone: 812-464-1907**
2. **Toll-Free: 1-800-246-6173**
3. **By e-mail:**
<http://www.usi.edu/library/refquestion.asp>
4. **Stop by the Rice Library reference desk to consult with a reference librarian. We will be glad to assist you.**