



# How to ... Distinguish Types of Periodicals

## Popular Magazines, Scholarly Journals, & Trade Journals

When compiling resources for a research paper, students usually need to include periodical articles. Instructors often require students to use only scholarly journals. Articles from a scholarly journal are usually authored by specialists in that academic discipline and are peer-reviewed before being accepted for publication in a refereed journal. Hence, articles published in scholarly journals are usually regarded as having a greater degree of academic value than articles published in popular magazines. Although magazine articles may be well-written and contain useful information, it is very important for students to be able to distinguish between popular and scholarly sources.

Another type of periodical is the trade journal. Articles in trade journals are usually written by and for members of a particular trade, profession or industry, and are often refereed. As with articles from scholarly journals, an article from a trade journal is usually regarded as having greater degree of academic value than an article published in a popular magazine.

The table below lists the distinguishing features of the three main types of periodicals.

Type:	Popular Magazines	Scholarly Journals	Trade Journals
<b>Audience:</b>	General readership, without any particular expertise or education	Students, researchers, scholars, specialists in a particular subject discipline	Members of a particular trade, profession or industry
<b>Language:</b>	Popular language, understood by the average reader	Specialized vocabulary of a subject discipline	Specialized vocabulary of a trade, profession or industry
<b>Content:</b>	Feature stories, reviews, editorials and opinion pieces; may report research findings as news	Original research, theoretical issues, discussions of new developments in the subject discipline	News, trends, problems and issues, technical and practical aspects of the trade, profession or industry
<b>Authors:</b>	Staff writers (not always named), free lance writers, usually not subject specialists	Subject specialists (articles are always signed); degrees and academic affiliation are usually given	Staff writers and freelancers, usually professionals in the field
<b>Documentation:</b>	Articles very rarely include references or footnotes	Meticulously documented articles; extensive references or footnotes	Some articles may include a few references or footnotes
<b>Appearance:</b>	Highly visual; lots of advertising and photos; usually printed on glossy paper	Sober design; little if any advertising or photography; mostly text with some graphs and tables; usually printed on non-glossy paper	Visual; some advertising (usually related to the field with which the journal is concerned) and photos
<b>Examples:</b>	<i>Time, Newsweek, Harper's, Rolling Stone, Atlantic Monthly</i>	<i>American Sociological Review, Journal of Applied Ecology, Journal of Applied Microbiology</i>	<i>American Libraries, Advertising Age</i>