

Scholarly, Trade, Opinion, or Popular?

A Guide to Distinguishing among Articles in Scholarly Journals, Trade Journals, Opinion Magazines, and Popular Magazines.

It can sometimes be difficult to determine if an article has been published in a peer-reviewed journal, particularly in an online environment, where there may be fewer clues. While each publication is unique, certain types of periodicals do share common features. For help in identifying which articles are scholarly and which articles are popular, consult the table below.

	SCHOLARLY JOURNALS	TRADE & PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS	OPINION MAGAZINES	POPULAR MAGAZINES
<i>Article Content</i>	Original research, in-depth studies, reviews of scholarly books; articles usually contain abstracts	Industry or field-specific news, product reviews, forecasts and trends, book reviews	Social and political commentaries, interviews, opinion pieces, book reviews	News of current events or popular culture, interviews; broad coverage of topics
<i>Article Authors</i>	Scholars, academics, researchers; authors are always named	Professionals, practitioners, some journalists	All types: academics, journalists, politicians; authors are often paid for their work	Usually journalists and free-lance writers; authors are not always named; most authors are paid for their work
<i>Documentation</i>	Sources are always cited using footnotes or parenthetical references and bibliographies	May include citations	May include citations	Citations and bibliographies are rare
<i>Article Length</i>	Long	Medium to long	Medium to long	Short
<i>Audience</i>	Scholars, academics, researchers	Members of a trade, profession, business, or industry	Educated readers	General public
<i>Language</i>	Discipline-specific, sophisticated, technical	Technical jargon	Non-technical language	Non-technical language
<i>Publisher</i>	Academic presses, scholarly associations	Trade associations	Non-profit organizations or commercial publishers	Commercial publishers
<i>Graphics</i>	May contain charts, graphs, or (in the sciences) photographs or illustrations that support the text	Photographs, illustrations, tables, and charts (often glossy)	May be heavily illustrated	Many eye-catching photographs and illustrations that have marketing appeal; usually glossy
<i>Advertisements (print versions)</i>	Few in number; usually from academic publishers or scholarly associations	May include glossy ads	Often have glossy ads	Many full-color, glossy ads for consumer products

<i>Examples</i>	<i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Modern Language Quarterly, Nature</i>	<i>Advertising Age, Architecture, Publishers Weekly</i>	<i>Dissent, The Nation, National Review, New Republic</i>	<i>Psychology Today, Scientific American, Time, U.S. News & World Report</i>
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What is a Peer-Reviewed Journal?

Unlike a popular magazine, a peer-reviewed or “refereed” journal does not maintain a staff of writers. Instead, the journal editors require authors to submit drafts of articles for consideration. These drafts are then reviewed by experts in the field who evaluate the articles for publication; reviewers assess the quality of authors’ research as well as their contribution to scholarship. This rigorous “peer review” process ensures that scholarly articles are of high quality.