

Distinguishing Periodicals: Scholarly, Trade, and Popular

The criteria on this chart can help you tell the difference

	Scholarly Journals	Trade Journals	Popular Magazines
Appearance	Plain-looking, few pictures except for maybe charts and graphs to support research findings	Cover often shows a workplace setting. Glossy paper. Pictures and illustrations in color.	Glossy, bright, eye-catching cover. Attractive format with lots of pictures and blurbs to capture attention.
Advertisements	Usually none	Ads for products or services related to profession or to advertise conference	Lots of ads for a variety of products.
Authors	Experts/scholars/researchers in the field. Author's name and professional affiliation are given	Practitioners in the field. Author's name and professional affiliation usually given	Written by professional writers, sometimes not even given a byline
Audience	Academic or researchers in a specific discipline	Members of a specific profession or industry	General public
Purpose	To communicate original research findings & discuss issues and practices in the field	Current trends in a particular profession, job ads, "how to" do something on the job	Entertainment, current events and popular culture
Language	Use terminology, jargon of the discipline. Scholarly or academic tone	Use terminology of profession, but in a more relaxed tone	Use simple, basic language and vocabulary to appeal to a wide audience.
Sources	Extensive bibliography at the end of the article	Articles may or may not contain bibliographies	Would be unusual to include any sources
Length	Articles usually quite long, 20+ pages on average	Article length ranges, but often 5-10 pages on the norm	Article length ranges, but often short and on broad topics
Accountability	Refereed or peer-reviewed. Often published by professional organization	Editorial review – format and style checked. Published by professional organization or commercial publisher	Editorial review-format and style checked; may use fact checkers. Published by commercial publishers

More guidance on the back . . .

Much college-level research will be done using periodicals, a generic term for publications that come out periodically. The most common types of periodicals are defined below:

Journals (geared to specific professions or experts in specific fields):

Scholarly Journals: Periodicals in which researchers/scholars share research studies and discussions of practices in their profession. Examples include: *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Adult Education Quarterly*, *College Composition & Communication*

Trade Journals: Cover news and trends in a particular industry or field. Examples: *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Library Journal*, *Plastics Technology*

Popular Periodicals (geared to general public):

News Magazines and Newspapers: Provide news and commentary on current events. Examples: *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *New York Times*

Opinion or Commentary Magazines: Promote a particular viewpoint. Examples: *Nation*, *National review*, *American Rifleman*

Popular Magazines: Geared to entertainment and recreational reading. Examples: *Sports Illustrated*, *Parents*, *Psychology Today*, *Vogue*

Tabloids: Sensational periodicals. Examples: *Globe*, *National Enquirer*, *Star*
Librarian's tip: Don't even **think** about using a tabloid for research, unless you're writing a paper about sensational journalism and need examples.

Often, college instructors will require the use of scholarly journals for an assignment. How do you tell the difference between a scholarly and a non-scholarly periodical? The table on the other side of this handout lists criteria that can help you distinguish among the different types of periodicals. The following reference book describes many periodicals and can be a great help:

Katz's Magazines for Libraries

Call Number: Ref/Z/6941/.K2

You can also go to the web page of the periodical and see how they describe themselves.

And you can always ask the Reference Librarian for help!

In person at the reference desk
by phone: 815-455-8762
by email: refdesk@mchenry.edu