

Journal or Magazine? Recognizing the Differences
Rod Library University of Northern Iowa

Journals and **magazines** are two types of **periodicals**. **Periodicals** are publications produced at regular intervals, generally more frequently than annually. Through subscriptions to over 3,000 periodicals in print and online, Rod Library provides up-to-date information in diverse fields of study.

To emphasize the distinctions between **journals** and **magazines**, the publications are often referred to as **scholarly journals** or **popular magazines**. **Scholarly journals** are written for experts or college students in the academic field or discipline. **Scholarly journals** are also referred to as **academic** or **research** journals. **Popular magazines** are written for the general public and often focus on news, offer entertainment, or provide brief information about diverse topics.

Consider the following criteria and distinctions as you evaluate whether a periodical is scholarly or popular. Keep in mind that the lines drawn among types of periodicals are not totally clear-cut. For example, some scholarly journals may publish editorials or opinion pieces which are not scholarly. Evaluate each article

	Scholarly or Academic Journals	Popular Magazines
Audience	Scholars, researchers, and experts as well as students in the academic field.	General public.
Purpose	To inform the scholarly community about the results of original research or experimentation, to explore theoretical concepts, or to examine practice.	To provide basic information for general awareness, to promote particular viewpoints, or to entertain.
Authors	Scholars, usually professors or researchers with a graduate degree in the field.	Usually editorial staff members, free-lance writers, or journalists with no special training in the field.
Author Information	Authors' names are clearly stated with each article and often their credentials and current positions (such as affiliation with a university) are given.	Usually the byline of each article provides only the authors' names; some articles do not even list an author.
Length/Depth	Long, detailed.	Short, little depth.
Vocabulary	Terminology used in the article is specialized—that of the discipline—and may contain jargon. The vocabulary assumes the reader has some knowledge of the subject.	Simple language used, generally high school or lower. Does not assume specialized knowledge.

	Scholarly or Academic Journals	Popular Magazines
Works Cited	Sources consulted are documented in text, cited in footnotes, or listed in bibliography	Articles do not have footnotes or bibliographies. Sometimes the individuals who were interviewed or publications that were consulted are mentioned in the text but usually full bibliographic information is not given.
Peer-Reviewed or Peer-Refereed	Articles are peer-reviewed or peer-refereed. Peer review occurs before the article is accepted for publication. The journal editor sends copies of a submitted article to experts in the field for their judgment of whether the article is sound and should be published as is, revised, or rejected.	Articles are not peer-reviewed. Generally articles are accepted if judged to be of interest to magazine readers.
Illustrations	Text may be accompanied by statistical tables or figures, scientific drawings, or explanatory diagrams.	Usually articles are heavily illustrated and accompanied by colorful photographs.
Overall Appearance Print	Journals generally have a sober, serious look and are printed on plain paper.	Magazines usually are visually appealing and designed to attract interest at a magazine rack or newspaper stand. Usually have advertising and are printed on glossy paper.
Overall Appearance Online	Emphasizes intellectual content; often subdued colors.	Flashy colors; may include consumer product ads and may offer podcasts or blogs.
Advertising	Few, if any, ads.	Many and splashy ads.
Examples	Child Abuse & Neglect Journal of Applied Psychology Learning Disabilities Quarterly Multicultural Education Nature New England Journal of Medicine	Business Week Ladies' Home Journal Newsweek Psychology Today Scientific American Time

This guide is based, in part, on guides developed at Cornell University and Georgia State University.

Barbara E. Weeg Rod Library University of Northern Iowa 7/09