

## Periodicals: Popular versus Scholarly

Writing research papers requires not only the use of books, but also articles from periodicals. Periodicals are publications that come out on a regular schedule and provide up-to-date information and scholarship. They include magazines, journals and newspapers. Articles in newspapers and magazines tend to be very different from articles in scholarly journals.

When issuing assignments, instructors often specify whether articles consulted are to be from **popular** or **scholarly** publications (the former usually referred to as *magazines*, the latter as *journals*). Although popular sources are not without merit and may contain well-considered writing, it is important to understand the difference between a scholarly source and a popular one. When evaluating a source to use in a research paper, the degree of authority and the depth of research on a given topic determine if the source has academic value.



Popular

Popular sources are those written for a general broad audience. The information may or may not be written by a recognized expert in the subject. Articles are usually written by a staff writer and can contain quotes or opinions of experts followed by the general interpretations of the staff writer. Within popular information sources are levels of credibility and importance.

Examples: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *USA Today*



## Scholarly

Scholarly sources contain articles written by experts in particular fields. These experts have been recognized by their degrees, work affiliation and research publications. The writings of these experts carry authority. Scholarly publications contain the latest research and findings. Many of the publications are subject specific and are critically evaluated by peers (fellow scholars) in the field for content, scholarly soundness and academic value.

Examples of Scholarly Journals:

*JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*

*American Journal of Philology*

*Slavic Review*

*Journal of Marriage and the Family*

*Modern Fiction Studies*

*Applied Physics Letters*

*American Sociological Review*

**Use the chart below to help you to identify additional features to distinguish between popular and scholarly sources**

<b>Popular</b>	<b>Scholarly</b>
<p><b>Purpose:</b> Intended to provide general information and/or entertainment to a broad audience, sell products, and/or promote a certain point of view.</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Intended to present original research, experimentation and opinion in a given field.</p>
<p><b>Topics:</b> General interest topics and current events. Articles offer an overview of subject matter; reportage, rather than original research; sometimes contain feature articles and reports on current social issues and public opinion.</p>	<p><b>Topics:</b> Specific, highly specialized topics in a given field. Articles often contain previously unpublished research and detail new developments in field.</p>
<p><b>Author:</b> Articles are usually written by a staff writer or freelance writers. Author name and/or credentials not always given.</p>	<p><b>Author:</b> Articles are written by a scholar in the field; the author is always identified.</p>
<p><b>Audience:</b> Intended for a general audience without any specific educational background or subject expertise.</p>	<p><b>Audience:</b> Intended for other scholars or researchers in the field as well as specialized readers. The audience is usually assumed to have some knowledge of the subject.</p>
<p><b>Format:</b> Short, simple articles meant to entertain more than inform. References are rarely cited and the original source of the information provided is often unclear.</p>	<p><b>Format:</b> Articles are generally long and are presented in a standard scholarly format (abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, references). Sources are cited in bibliographies and/or footnotes.</p>
<p><b>Publication:</b> Published by commercial publishers. Edited and approved for publication in-house (not peer reviewed).</p>	<p><b>Publication:</b> Usually published by educational organizations, professional organizations, or by scholarly publishers. Articles selected for publication have been reviewed by a panel of experts in the field (peer review) for content, scholarly soundness and academic value.</p>
<p><b>Appearance:</b> Designed to attract the eye of potential newsstand customers. Heavy use of photography and other forms of illustrations. Many contain large amounts of advertising aimed at the general public, usually for consumer products.</p>	<p><b>Appearance:</b> Simple layout. Sober design: mostly text with some tables or graphs accompanying articles; usually little or no photography. May contain some subject-related advertising.</p>
<p><b>Language:</b> Simple, casual language appropriate to most educational levels. Any technical or subject-specific terminology used is usually defined.</p>	<p><b>Language:</b> Formal, scholarly language incorporating technical or subject-specific terminology.</p>