

Periodicals: Popular vs. Scholarly Literature

Simply stated, all periodicals are publications that are published periodically. Periodicals are not all the same. Periodicals are presented in different mediums, they utilize different publication processes, and they appeal to a variety of readerships. Below you will find three types of periodicals. You will also find some distinctions between what the academic community considers **popular** and **scholarly** literature.

Popular Source: Newspapers

- Written for a general audience.
- Good for current news, opinions, and statistics.
- Contain articles regarding timely subject matter.
- Articles are usually written by reporters and columnists rather than specialists.
- Articles may contain sources for authenticity, but newspaper articles do not contain footnotes or reference lists.



Popular Source: Magazines

- Subject matter can be either general or focused on a particular topic.
- Written for a general audience and have mass market appeal.
- Contain language that is easy to understand, pictures, and advertisements.



Scholarly Source: Journals

- Communicate scholarly research regarding a specific field of study.
- Are often only published after being **peer reviewed** by other experts in the field.
- Research is documented throughout the article.
- Reference to other research in the field is documented.
- Scholarly journals can contain research articles of an empirical nature. These usually include abstracts, introductions, methods, results, discussions, conclusions, and references.



Scholarly vs. Popular Periodical Literature

A Checklist

Sometimes it will be obvious what is scholarly and what is not. If you are not positive, try out this checklist just to be sure. Each checkmark counts as a point. What kind of periodical do you have?

Scholarly		Popular	
No advertisements, few or no pictures (charts and graphs do not count). Black and White.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lots of advertisements and pictures. Big colorful glossy pages.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Author is an expert or scholar on a particular subject. (e.g. PhD)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Author is a staff columnist or freelance writer.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contains "References" or "Works Cited" at the end of an article.	<input type="checkbox"/>	No references or footnotes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article is rather lengthy, close to or greater than 10 pages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Article is fairly short.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article uses academic language and/or technical jargon.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Article uses simple language. It is easy to read.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article is published by a University or professional organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Article is published by a company or for-profit organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Article is structured and is divided into sections, often times including an Abstract, Introduction (w/ Literature Review), Methods, Discussions and Conclusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not as structured. May have section headings, but the headings do not describe research methodologies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total:		Total:	

Periodical Type: _____