

A scholarly journal is a periodical that contains articles written by experts in a particular field of study. The articles are intended to be read by other experts or students of the field, and they are typically much more sophisticated and advanced than the articles found in general magazines. Many professors assign research projects that require students to read articles published in scholarly journals. This guide offers some tips to help distinguish scholarly journals from other periodicals.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

PURPOSE: Scholarly journals communicate the results of research in the field of study covered by the journal. Scholarly articles reflect a systematic and thorough study of a single topic, often involving experiments or surveys. Scholarly journals may also occasionally publish review articles that summarize the current state of knowledge on a topic.

APPEARANCE: Scholarly journals lack the slick advertising, classified ads, coupons, etc., found in popular magazines. The articles are often printed one column to a page, as in books, and there are often graphs, tables, or charts referring to specific points in the articles.

AUTHORITY: Scholarly articles are written by the person(s) who did the research being reported. When more than two authors are listed for a single article, the first author listed is often the primary researcher who coordinated or supervised the work done by the other authors. The most highly-regarded scholarly journals are often those sponsored by professional associations, such as the American Psychological Association or the American Chemical Society.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY: Articles submitted to scholarly journals are evaluated by an editorial board and other experts before they are accepted for publication. This evaluation, called peer review, is designed to ensure that the articles published are based on solid research that meets the normal standards of the field of study covered by the journal. Another term often used for journals that utilize peer review is "refereed journals".

WRITING STYLE: Articles in scholarly journals usually contain an advanced vocabulary, since the authors use the technical language or jargon of their field of study. The authors assume that the reader already possesses a basic understanding of the field of study.

REFERENCES: The authors of scholarly articles always indicate the sources of their information. These references are usually listed at the end of an article, but they may appear in the form of footnotes, endnotes, or a bibliography.

EXAMPLES OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

Adolescence, American Historical Review, Art History, Chaucer Review, Counseling Psychologist, Geological Society of America Bulletin, Harvard Law Review, Journal of Black Studies, Journal of Experimental Biology, Journal of Learning Disabilities, Management Science, Philosophical Review, Religious Studies, Urban Affairs Quarterly, Women's Studies.

PERIODICALS THAT ARE NOT SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

POPULAR MAGAZINES: These are periodicals that one typically finds at grocery stores, airport newsstands, or bookstores at a shopping mall. Popular magazines are designed to appeal to a broad audience, and they usually contain relatively brief articles written in a readable, non-technical language.

Examples include: Car and Driver, Cosmopolitan, Esquire, Essence, Gourmet, Life, People Weekly, Readers' Digest, Rolling Stone, Sports Illustrated, Vanity Fair, and Vogue.

NEWS MAGAZINES: These periodicals, which are usually issued weekly, provide information on topics of current interest, but their articles seldom have the depth or authority of scholarly articles.

Examples include: Newsweek, Time, U.S. News and World Report.

OPINION MAGAZINES: These periodicals contain articles aimed at an educated audience interested in keeping up with current events or ideas, especially those pertaining to topical issues. Very often their articles are written from a particular political, economic, or social point of view.

Examples include: Catholic World, Christianity Today, Commentary, Ms., The Militant, Mother Jones, The Nation, National Review, The New Republic, The Progressive, and World Marxist Review.

TRADE MAGAZINES: People who need to keep up with developments in a particular industry or occupation read these magazines. Many trade magazines publish one or more special issues each year that focus on industry statistics, directory lists, or new product announcements.

Examples include: Beverage World, Progressive Grocer, Quick Frozen Foods International, Rubber World, Sales and Marketing Management, Skiing Trade News, and Stores.