



Scholarly or Peer-Reviewed Journals

First, some helpful definitions from Webster's Third International Dictionary:

Scholar (noun) 2a: one who by long systematic study (as in a university) has gained a high degree of mastery in one or more of the academic disciplines; esp.: one who has engaged in advanced study and acquired the minutiae of knowledge in some special field along with accuracy and skill in investigation and powers of critical analysis in interpretation of such knowledge

Scholarly (adjective): like, characteristic of, or suitable to a scholar as a: concerned with academic study and esp. with research. b: exhibiting the methods and attitudes of a scholar

Scholarly journals contain articles written by scholars in a particular field or someone else who has done substantive research in the field. The term *peer-reviewed* describes the editorial process by which many of these journals accept articles for publication. Authors who want to publish in the journal must first submit a copy to a review board consisting of fellow scholars (their peers). These peers review the article for accuracy and relevance and decide whether it should be published in their journal. Sometimes journals with this type of process are called *refereed* or *juried*.

Look for: A sober, serious look. Lots of text with few, if any, ads. Charts and graphs, but few glossy photos. The author's name(s) will always appear at the beginning or end of the articles. Sources are important; you will see bibliographies, footnotes or works cited lists in each article. Many scholarly journals are published by professional organizations (Examples: The American Medical Association or the American Psychological Association) to report original research or disseminate other important information to their peers. See the comparison checklist below for more criteria.

Scholarly / Peer-Reviewed Journal Comparison Checklist

	SCHOLARLY / PEER REVIEWED	SUBSTANTIVE	POPULAR
EXAMPLES	JOURNAL OF POPULAR CULTURE THE ART BULLETIN SPECULUM MODERN FICTION STUDIES	HARPER'S NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN	PEOPLE ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY BETTER HOMES & GARDENS IN STYLE
PEER REVIEW / PUBLICATION ACCEPTANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writers are scholars and researchers • Scholars of equal standing (peers) or other qualified experts review each article submission before publication acceptance •Peers may be an outside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Writers either work for the magazine or are "free-lance" writers •Acceptance based on timeliness or commercial appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Writers often work for the magazine •Acceptance based on timeliness or commercial appeal

	SCHOLARLY / PEER REVIEWED	SUBSTANTIVE	POPULAR
	editorial board •Author names are hidden from the peer reviewers - "blind reviews."		
PURPOSE & AIMS	•Often nonprofit •To disseminate knowledge in a particular field or discipline •Present original research, reports, and statistics •In-depth analysis of topics •Reviews of current literature / notable books in a particular field •Aim for objectivity & balanced representation of issues	•Usually for-profit / to make money •Provide general information, news & current events •In-depth reporting and feature articles •Interviews •Analysis & opinion •Some aim for balance & objectivity, others are biased towards a particular point of view	•To make money / sell products •To entertain •Provide general information •To sell products •May be biased towards a particular point of view
CONTENT	•Generally lengthy articles accompanied with bibliographies •Author(s) set out to prove or disprove a thesis •Language is formal and technical; discipline specific and assumes a certain level of knowledge on the part of the reader •Book reviews / motion picture reviews / exhibition reviews are lengthy and may rival feature articles in richness of content and commentary	•Content varies •Article length varies •Book reviews / motion picture reviews / exhibition reviews generally geared towards the informed dilettante •Language is less formal; technical or non-standard words used are usually defined for the reader	•Content varies – generally newsy and/or entertaining •Article length varies •Book reviews / motion picture reviews / exhibition reviews are geared towards the potential consumer •Language may be casual; conversational or anecdotal Reading level is below 12 th grade.
SOURCES & DOCUMENTATION	•Extensive documentation - sources are cited •Bibliographies, Endnotes, and/or footnotes are provided •Always a statement of responsibility – articles are signed	•May or may not cite sources or include a bibliography •Articles usually signed but not always	•Usually does not include documentation or citations of sources •Articles may or may not be signed

	SCHOLARLY / PEER REVIEWED	SUBSTANTIVE	POPULAR
AUDIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Target audience is usually discipline focused / specialized •Scholars, university faculty and students, specialists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Audience varies – general public to special groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •General public or niche market
ADVERTISING & ILLUSTRATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Advertising is very rare •Sometimes illustrated with maps, charts, graphs, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Advertising is present •Illustrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lots of advertising, heavily commercial •“Glossy” - Lots of photos & illustrations

It might help to give you some examples of the types of periodicals that are generally considered not scholarly. News magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*, opinion magazines like the *National Review* or *Nation*, popular magazines like *Reader's Digest* or *People*, and trade journals like *Beverage World* are not scholarly journals.

If you're in doubt about a source, always check with your professor. After all, he or she will have the final say - in the form of your grade!

Sources to Check for More Help:

There are reference books that tell you whether a journal is considered scholarly or not, and whether it is peer-reviewed / refereed. Look for these at Doherty library:

Magazines for Libraries by William Katz (Call number: Ref PN 4832.M233 – Ask for it at the Reference desk). This is an annotated listing by subject of some 6500 periodicals. Find a journal by title using the title index at the end of the book. Each entry gives the title of the periodical, start of publication date, publisher, address, pricing and circulation size. Audience level, scope, subject, purpose and/or aims of the publication are provided in a brief annotation. Indexing sources are also provided.

Ulrich's Periodicals Directory from Bowker (Call number: Ref Z6941 .U4 2004 – Located in Reference books). This multi-volume set lists over 38,000 serials, including newspapers. Volumes one through three are the subject listing. Volume four contains indexes by title and issn. An arrow symbol (►) next to a journal title indicates that it is a peer-reviewed or refereed publication.