Scholarly vs. Popular Journals

How can you tell whether an article is from a scholarly or popular journal? Take a look at the differences between scholarly and popular journals to find out!

Documentation
Scholarly: Bibliographies, footnotes, or other references are always included

Popular: None

Authors
Scholarly: Experts, scholars, and researchers: authors named along with their instructional affiliation

Popular: Staff writers, generalists; may be anonymous

Peer-Reviewed*
Scholarly: Articles are most likely peer-reviewed, or refereed

Popular: Articles are not peer-reviewed

Publisher
Scholarly: Usually a university or an association

Popular: Commercial Firm

Article Type
Scholarly: Long research articles with abstracts, tables, graphs, charts, and summaries

Popular: Few numbered pages (1-10), non-technical articles with photos and graphs

Audience
Scholarly: Scholarly readers, such as professors, researchers, students

Popular: General Readers

Writing Style
Scholarly: Formal, scholarly

Popular: Informal, written to entertain and inform general audience

Journal Title
Scholarly: Journal titles may include terms such as “review”, “bulletin”, or “journal”

Popular: Magazine titles lack such “designating” terms

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Appearance

**Scholarly:** Plain

**Popular:** Colorful, illustrated

Publication Frequency

**Scholarly:** Issues tend to be published less often (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually)

**Popular:** Issues tend to be published more frequently (daily, weekly, monthly)

Page Numbering

**Scholarly:** Issues tend to be successively numbered

**Popular:** Each issue tends to begin with page 1

Advertising

**Scholarly:** No ads or ads for books or other scholarly tools

**Popular:** Ads for business or consumer products

Illustrations

**Scholarly:** If present, illustrations support the text

**Popular:** Often illustrated for marketing appeal

Examples of Scholarly and Popular Journals

**Scholarly:** *Journal of Abnormal Psychology; Modern Fiction Studies; Journal of the American Medical Association.*

**Popular:** *Psychology Today; Newsweek; Sports Illustrated*

Footnotes

* Peer-reviewed indicates that the article was submitted to a panel of scholars/experts within the field and critiqued for accuracy and content prior to its approval for publication.