

Identifying Scholarly Journals

Researchers may choose or be required to limit their periodical sources to scholarly journals. But it is not always easy to identify a periodical as scholarly. The following general guidelines should address many of these concerns. However, students are advised to ask their professors about considerations specific to a particular discipline.

Scholarly journals differ from popular magazines in a variety of ways. Here are some of the distinguishing characteristics:

Scholarly Journals	Popular Magazines
Contain more specialized subject matter	Contain more general subject matter
Articles include footnotes or endnotes and a list of references or works cited.	Rarely include bibliographies or notes.
Articles report on research	Articles may be oriented toward general information or entertainment
Articles almost always will be "refereed" (reviewed by a group of scholars in the field prior to publication); the term "peer review" is also used.	No refereeing process
Authors always identified; usually subject experts	Authors may not be identified; generally reporters /journalists
Articles often use terminology specific to a particular discipline	Articles use language suitable to a more general audience, of varying educational levels
Graphics generally used for purposes of illustration or to convey data	Graphics and photos are common, used for impact and appeal as well as illustration
Little or no advertising in most disciplines	Advertising pervasive

These guidelines are a starting point for those browsing articles. Some of our database services, such as **ScholarSearch**, **Academic Search Premier** and **Proquest**, allow you to **limit your search to Academic/Scholarly journals** (click the tab/link for Academic/Scholarly Journals and/or choose the document type Scholarly Journals). Many of the subject indexes/databases that the library subscribes to cover primarily scholarly journals.

Looking at the **Guidelines for Authors** in the journal issues (or on the journal's website) is often a good way to determine whether a publication is scholarly, and further whether it is refereed/peer reviewed. However, if you are not sure, you can consult the Library's reference collection.

Students may want to confer with their professors about use of a particular source for a given assignment, and the reference staff is always glad to assist with questions about determining scholarly journal status.