




Scholarly, Popular, and Professional/Trade Periodicals, What's the Difference?

Generally, scholarly periodicals are viewed as being more authoritative while popular periodicals are viewed as being less credible. This is why faculty often require students to use scholarly, not popular, articles for their research.

The table below will give you some guidelines in deciding whether a periodical is scholarly, popular, or trade.

	Popular	Scholarly	Professional/Trade
Example			
Authors	Reporters, magazine staff, freelance writers	Scholars, researchers, experts in the field	Practitioners, educators, specialists within the profession or trade
Audience	General public	Researchers, scholars, students	Professionals in the field, researchers, and students
Purpose	Inform, entertain, cover special interests	Inform, report, and share original research and experimentation with the rest of the scholarly world	Provide information and news to practitioners in a profession
Content	Personalities, news & general interest articles.	Research results, methodology & theory	New trends, techniques, and organizational news
Language	Non-technical	Terminology and language of the discipline; reader is assumed to have similar background	Technical terminology of the profession
Articles	Brief, providing broad overviews. Bibliography usually not provided, references may be mentioned in text	Lengthy, providing in-depth analysis. Bibliography and/or footnotes, in standardized citation format, are required to document research	Length varies Bibliography and/or footnotes may be provided
Review Process	No formal peer review process, reviewed by editors on staff	Reviewed by a board of experts in the field (refereed) or by the author's peers (peer reviewed)	Includes some peer-review periodicals; most are reviewed by editors (often professionals in the field)