

Magazines vs. Journals

Library Resource Guide

Below is a listing of general characteristics which can be used to identify differences between popular magazines, trade magazines, and scholarly journals. Some magazines and journals, however, may not meet all the criteria in any one category. Journals that are “peer reviewed” or “refereed” are also those whose articles are of sound research and high quality. If you need to verify whether a journal is refereed, consult *Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory* for that particular journal title. Also, the publications listed in many of the EBSCOHost research databases indicate whether a journal is peer reviewed.

Popular Magazines vs Trade Magazines vs Scholarly Journals

Characteristics	Popular Magazines	Trade Magazines	Scholarly Journals
Appearance	Attractive appearance Eye-catching cover	Cover depicts industrial setting	Plain cover
	Pictures and illustrations in color	Pictures and illustrations in color	May contain graphs, charts or case studies
	Glossy paper	Glossy paper	Plain paper
Audience	Non-professionals General audience	Members of a specific business, industry or organization Professional or trade-associated audiences	Professors, scholars, researchers, or students
Content	Personalities, news, and general interest articles	Industry trends, new products or techniques, and organizational news	Report original research, discoveries, or experimentation
	A wide variety of subjects	Articles may include industry-specific statistics Articles are published by professional or trade associations	Publish research projects, their methodology, and significance
	Articles written by staff, may be unsigned	Articles written by staff or contributing authors	Articles written by contributing authors
Advertisements	Heavy	Moderate All or most are trade related	Few or none
Reviewers	Reviewed by editors	Reviewed by editors	Reviewed by editors, peers, and referees
Documentation	Few or no bibliographic references	May have short bibliographic references	Bibliographic references (footnotes, end notes, etc.)
Examples	<i>National Geographic</i> <i>National Wildlife</i> <i>People</i> <i>Time</i>	<i>Global Cosmetic Industry</i> <i>People Management</i> <i>Recycling Today</i> <i>Rubber World</i>	<i>Biology of the Cell</i> <i>Social Forces</i> <i>School Science Review</i> <i>Journal of Health Care Management</i>

Exercise

Choose a popular magazine, a trade magazine, and a scholarly journal and select one article from each publication. Using the characteristics of the three publications as a guide, describe how the information is presented differently.

Title of the Popular Magazine selected: _____

Title of the Trade Magazine selected: _____

Title of the Scholarly Journal selected: _____

	Popular Magazine	Trade Magazine	Scholarly Journal
Appearance: Describe the appearance of your publication. Are the pictures in color and pages glossy?			
Audience: Is the audience the general public, trade associated members, professors, scholars, or students?			
Content: Are the articles signed? Are they written by staff or contributing authors? Do they include a wide variety of subjects? Do they report original research or discoveries?			
Advertisements: Is there little or no advertising? Is any of it trade related?			
Reviewers: Are the articles reviewed by editors? Are they reviewed by peers or referees?			
Documentation: Are there few or no bibliographic references? Are there many bibliographic references?			