

**Georgia Perimeter College – Decatur Campus  
Learning Resources Center**

**Scholarly Journals VS Popular Magazines**

There are two major types of periodicals that you will encounter when doing library research - **scholarly journals** and **popular magazines**. While both kinds of periodicals may have information about the same topic, the presentation, depth and type of information will be different. Most research papers will require the use of at least some articles from scholarly or peer reviewed journals. The following table summarizes the main differences between scholarly journals and popular magazines. The table continues on the back of the handout.

	<b>Scholarly Journals</b>	<b>Popular Magazines</b>
<b>Audience/ Language</b>	Articles in scholarly journals are written for professionals in a particular field. The language of the articles will often contain jargon related to that field.	Articles are written for a general audience, are free of technical jargon and easy to understand.
<b>Author</b>	Authors are usually experts in a given field. The credentials and institutional affiliation of the authors are listed with each article.	Articles are written by professional journalists who may or may not have special knowledge of the topic. The author's name may not be listed.
<b>Editorial Information</b>	Edited by an editorial board consisting of experts in the field. The names, institutional affiliations and credentials of the editorial board are listed in the front of each issue.	Edited by journalists who may or may not have specialized knowledge of the topics of articles. Full editorial information is usually not provided, often just the name of the Editor in Chief or a few main editors.
<b>Editorial Process</b>	Articles are subjected to some form of peer review by outside experts in the topic covered by the article before being accepted for publication. Articles may be returned to the authors for revision before being accepted.	Articles are not reviewed by subject specialists.

	<b>Scholarly Journals</b>	<b>Popular Magazines</b>
<b>Format</b>	Research articles, especially in science and health science journals, may contain the following sections: abstract, literature review, methodology, results and conclusion.	Articles do not have a specific format or structure.
<b>References</b>	Articles will contain a bibliography of works cited and/ or footnotes documenting the research.	Articles do not contain a bibliography or footnotes.
<b>Examples</b>	<u>Journal of the American Medical Association</u> , <u>American Literature</u>	<u>Time</u> , <u>Newsweek</u> , <u>Sports Illustrated</u>

Always remember that just because a journal has the word "journal" in the title, does not mean that it's a scholarly journal. On the other hand, many scholarly journal titles do not contain the word "journal". For example, the Wall Street Journal is a financial newspaper, not a scholarly journal, and American Literature is a peer reviewed scholarly journal.

In addition, not every article in a peer reviewed publication undergoes review. There may be editorials, letters to the editor and book reviews in scholarly journals that are not refereed. It is important to evaluate each article to determine if it is acceptable for your needs. If you're not sure of the type of a particular article ask at the Reference Desk for assistance.