

Popular vs. Scholarly Sources

This video will talk about the difference between popular and scholarly sources.

If your prof asks you to use scholarly journals or peer reviewed articles for an assignment it's because they contain accurate and high-quality academic information.

Scholarly articles report what has been studied or researched on a topic.

They are excellent sources to support the argument in your paper and the bibliographies at the end will point you to other relevant information.

Using scholarly journals in your assignments will give your work and ideas credibility as well.

But how can you tell which journals are scholarly and which are not?

There are a number of ways to spot the differences.

Popular magazines will be heavy with advertisements, usually for consumer products. Meanwhile, scholarly journals will have few advertisements, and they'll most often be for a scholarly book or conference.

The articles in scholarly journals will be original, written by scientists, professors, researchers, or other experts in the field, and will likely be peer reviewed.

Compare these to the articles in popular magazines, which are often written by staff members or freelance writers, and rarely include bibliographies.

To see a full comparison chart, start from the library homepage at lib.uwaterloo.ca and click on the Help and Instruction link, which is 4th from the bottom in the left-hand menu.

Now follow the How do I...? link and click on Scholarly Journals vs. Popular Magazines.

But what if you still can't tell just by looking at it? How can you be sure that the article you found is truly high quality?

You can always check out information on the journal though Ulrich's Global Serials Directory.

Return to the library homepage and click the Research Databases link, which is 5th from the bottom in the right hand menu.

Now select U and follow the link to find Ulrich's.

Here you can type in the title of the journal and quickly find out whether or not it's peer-reviewed and whether or not the content is academic.

If you have any other questions about scholarly journals, take a look at our videos on the peer review process and how to find peer reviewed journals.

You can also ask a librarian. We're happy to help!

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