

Magazine or Journal?

Your assignment may require you to include journal articles among your primary resources. This means that your instructor expects to see evidence that you have read and interpreted articles that provide academic, professional, or technical research or review material in a specific field. Information (quotes, statistics, and other data) obtained from popular magazines may be accepted, but articles from popular magazines would not meet this requirement.

How do you identify an academic journal article? It's not always easy...

A popular magazine article

- Informs by entertaining the reader
- Subject area is usually general
- Is published for a general audience
- Can be understood by average reader;
- Has lots of glossy advertisements
- Has lots of glossy color photographs, cartoons, and other illustrations
- May be published daily or weekly
- Are fairly brief (1/8 to 2 pages)
- Does not include abstract or conclusion
- May not specify any author(s); author not usually a specialist in any one field
- Rarely cites other publications
- May have hidden or stated commercial or other bias
- Popular magazines are available for purchase at supermarkets and news stands as well as bookstores

Examples of magazine titles at the NVCTC Library:

Fire Rescue
Men's Health
Popular Science
Parents
Psychology Today
Rolling Stone

An academic or professional journal article

- Informs by instructing or furthering the research of the reader
- Subject matter is usually focused
- Is published for a professional or academic audience
- Reading level is advanced; uses specific words and phrases
- Has few, if any ads (sometimes job openings are posted)
- May include graphs & diagrams, few illustrations in color unless subject matter (art, design, photography) calls for color
- Is usually published monthly, quarterly, or annually
- Are usually lengthy (4-5 pages to 30 pages or more)
- Usually includes an abstract & conclusion section
- Clearly specifies the author(s), and gives academic credentials; author is a specialist or scholar in that field
- Provides detailed footnotes & bibliography
- Admits any bias and invites critical analysis; strives for truth; includes dissenting points of view
- Academic journals are only available for purchase from university bookstores (and sometimes megabookstores)

Compare with same-subject journal titles at the NVCTC Library:

Fire Technology
Journal of Community Health
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
Early Childhood Education Journal
Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis
American Music

Please note: All of the library's Electronic Databases include a search feature that allows you to eliminate popular magazine articles from your search results. This limiter may be called "refereed publications," "peer reviewed," or "scholarly journals" & when clicked on, your search results will only include articles that come from journals.

If still in doubt, print the first page and take it to your instructor for review.