

Magazines vs. Journals: What's the Difference?

For an assignment, a professor may ask you to find a journal article related to some aspect of the class. However, before searching for a journal article you need to know the difference between magazine articles and scholarly journal articles.



Magazine



Scholarly Journal

Look and Feel	Magazines typically have glossy, colorful and eye-appealing covers. Additionally, they contain color photographs, illustrations, and numerous advertisements.	Journals are somewhat less visually appealing compared to magazines. Photographs are only included to supplement research, and advertising is kept to a minimum.
Audience and Purpose	Articles are usually written to inform or entertain – sometimes both. Providing a broad overview on a topic, articles are written for people with a basic level of education.	Articles are used to report the results of primary research being conducted in a field of study. Keeping other researchers up-to-date in their field, articles are filled with charts, graphs, and professional jargon.
Authors	Articles are written by a staff writer or free lance writer – typically they are not experts on the subject they are writing about. The author's qualifications are rarely given.	Articles are written by experts in a particular field of study – often researchers working for academic institutions. The author's qualifications are almost always provided.
Documentation	Articles rarely document their sources or research – you don't typically find references at the end of a magazine article.	Authors of journal articles use extensive documentation to back up their research and provide a framework for their own study. With journal articles, you get a lot of references.
Credibility	Before publication, articles are checked for accuracy by an editor. Editors are typically not subject experts in any area of study.	Articles go through an extensive review process by other qualified researchers before publication. Proper scientific methodology, statistical analysis, and overall research quality are assessed.