# How to... Evaluate Sources

This table below lists some of the distinguishing characteristics among different types of periodicals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>ARTICLE CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>PHYSICAL APPEARANCE</th>
<th>STRENGTHS &amp; WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scholarly Journals</strong></td>
<td>Inform and report original research</td>
<td>Lengthy articles written by scholars, professors or researchers within the specific discipline</td>
<td>Usually plain black print on white paper</td>
<td><strong>Strength:</strong> The in-depth nature of the article is helpful with obtaining information. Inclusion of bibliographies is useful if looking for additional sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide in-depth analysis of issues related to a specific discipline</td>
<td>Specific terminology pertaining to the subject matter</td>
<td>Rarely photographs or advertising</td>
<td><strong>Weakness:</strong> Terminology and depth of articles may be difficult to understand if reader is not familiar with the subject matter.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional &amp; Trade Periodicals</strong></td>
<td>Current trends, news and research in a specific field</td>
<td>Articles vary in length and are often written by staff writers or freelance journalists</td>
<td>Some photographs and graphics</td>
<td><strong>Strength:</strong> Provides up-to-date information on the profession, including trends and issues</td>
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<td>Language specific to those within the given profession</td>
<td>Advertising specific to the discipline</td>
<td><strong>Weakness:</strong> The characteristics of professional/trade periodicals and scholarly sources can be at times very similar making it difficult to distinguish the sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Popular &amp; Special Interest Magazines</strong></td>
<td>Entertain, inform and persuade without providing in-depth analysis</td>
<td>Articles are usually fairly short, written by freelance journalists, editorial staff, or the author(s) may not be identified</td>
<td>Slick and glossy pages</td>
<td>Authors are typically not experts on the given subject matter and may present a bias or personal opinion.</td>
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<td>Articles provide general information, with little detail and no jargon</td>
<td>Many photographs</td>
<td><strong>Weakness:</strong> There is often a lack of depth to articles; this can be difficult when trying to obtain information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*For more information visit the Communications Library or go to: [http://www.library.uiuc.edu/cmx/](http://www.library.uiuc.edu/cmx/)*