

## How to...

# Evaluate Sources

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

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

*For more information visit the Communications Library or go to:  
<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/cmz/>*