

How can I tell whether it's an Academic Journal or Popular Magazine?

Sometimes a lecturer will ask you to make sure you read only academic journals for a particular assignment. How can you tell whether a journal really is academic or scholarly, as it's sometimes called? Well, for a start, an academic journal is often called "Journal of ..." or "International Journal of..." but here are a few other clues you can look out for: -

	ACADEMIC	POPULAR
Author	Articles are usually written by "academics" – professors or lecturers – specialists or experts researching a particular field - for other academics. Under the authors' names will usually appear the names of the universities where they work	Authors of articles in popular magazines are often journalists working on the magazine, who aren't experts in the field. Sometimes they may be named but often the articles will be anonymous – published without a name
Length of article	Academic journals tend to have longer articles which analyse topics in depth or present the results of a specific piece of research	Popular magazines tend to have shorter articles which give you a broader overview of topics
Language/Style	You are more likely to find specialised vocabulary and jargon and the writing style may be more technical or complicated. An academic article usually won't seem like an easy read!	Articles in popular magazines are more likely to be written in non-technical language without so much specialised vocabulary. The result is that almost anyone can understand them but they may be over-simplified
Peer Review	Academic articles are peer-reviewed - critically evaluated by a number of experts from the same field as the author before the journal's editor decides to publish them. It's a sort of quality control. The printed journal usually contains in each issue a list of the members of this editorial panel	Popular articles are not peer-reviewed. The editor of the magazine decides which articles to publish
Structure	Articles in academic journals are usually more structured. Sections often included are: - abstract (summary), literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, and especially bibliography of works cited	There is no set structure or format and there usually isn't a bibliography although names of other reports or books might be mentioned in the text