The word periodical comes from the word period, which means a length or unit of time. A **periodical is anything that is published (or issued) on a regular basis.** A daily newspaper, a weekly news magazine, a monthly journal, and an annual book series are all examples of periodicals.

**A word of Caution:**

Just because something has been printed in a *peer reviewed* or *scholarly journal* doesn't automatically make the item peer reviewed; but it's a good start.

All journals have several types of information published in each edition. For example, if the journal is *peer reviewed* then a portion will be *referred*. Types of Information that are NOT *peer reviewed* will include editorials, book reviews, letters to the editor, professional development, erratum, and news items. What you are looking for are articles (including scientific articles), studies, case reports and systematic reviews. When you read the article it should show original work or research.

**Scholarly Journal** (A.K.A. Professional Journal or Refereed Journal) Journals such as American Historical Review, Bioscience, New England Journal of Medicine, and Social Psychology Quarterly are all considered scholarly or refereed journals. A journal that contains articles and research by scholars and experts in a specific field who wish to share their research with other professionals/scholars. Articles are usually based on original research and contain author credentials, abstracts and bibliographies. Professional associations, Scholarly presses, Universities, or Academic / Research Organizations often publish these journals. The language in a Scholarly Journal tends to be academic and can be very technical often using the language of the discipline. Graphs, charts, and/or formulas can be included as well as graphics but these periodicals usually do not contain glossy ads and/or pictures.

Where Scholarly or Professional Journals are written by experts in the field with the goal of sharing authoritative content on a topic NOT ALL Scholarly Journals are Peer Reviewed. Peer Reviewed Journals take the extra step of having a group of experts (jury of peers) in the field of study read, evaluate and approve for publication each article. This extra step helps insure the articles offer verifiable, accurate information. Remember just because an article is scholarly does not necessarily mean that it is peer reviewed. Know what your professor wants.

**Periodicals That Are NOT Scholarly**

**News Magazines** such as Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report are not scholarly journals. These magazines are aimed at a general audience, written by journalists or staff writers and offering timely information and current affairs. This "general audience" does not require subject familiarity or an advanced reading and comprehension level. Glossy ads and photos are prevalent.

**Newspapers** such as New York Times, The State, Christian Science Monitor, Wall Street Journal, USA Today are written by journalists for a general audience to offer news and current
information. News Papers can be a **Primary Source** for information about an event, but they are **not Scholarly Periodicals**.

**Opinion Magazines** (AKA Journals of Commentary) such as Mother Jones, Atlantic, The Nation, National Review, or The New Republic are **not scholarly journals**. These periodicals are aimed at an educated audience, but without assuming particular scholarly backgrounds. Opinion magazines comment on current events and offer a particular viewpoint on world affairs, politics, and cultural matters. They can offer commentaries on social & political issues and sometimes act as a voice of activist organizations. Glossy ads and photos are prevalent.

**Trade Journals** (AKA Trade Magazines) such as Automotive News, Home Healthcare Nurse, Teaching Exceptional Children, Library Journal or E Week are **not scholarly journals**. These magazines are industry specific and designed to keep the practitioner updated in the trends, news and product information for the field. They can offer company, organization and biographical information along with statistics, forecasts employment and career information. Glossy ads (usually topic related) and photos are prevalent.

**Popular Magazines** such as People, Jet, Sports Illustrated, Entertainment Weekly, Sierra or New Yorker are **not scholarly journals**. Most academic libraries do NOT subscribe to many of these magazines. Instead, you will find a wide variety of popular magazines at public libraries. Popular magazines are NOT the kind of source to rely upon when writing an academic research paper. Glossy ads and photos are prevalent.

1. Check to see how articles are chosen for publication:
   • Is it a publication sponsored by a professional society or association?
   • Is there a list of reviewers inside the front cover, on the first few pages?
   • Is it in Ulrichs list of "Refereed" or Peer Reviewed or Juried Journals? (Ulrichs Database is available online)

2. Look at the general characteristics of the article / does the article provide at least some of the following:
   • Is the original print journal plain and lacking glossy photos and ads?
   • Does the title of article reflect its content?
   • Are the sections titled? for example: Introduction, Literature Review, Theory or Background, Subjects, Methods, Results, Discussion
   • Is there a list of references or is there a bibliography?
   • Are the author’s credentials listed?
• Is there an abstract at the beginning of the article?

• Is the article based on original research or authorities in the field rather than popular or personal opinion?

• Are there diagrams, illustrations and statistics?

If the answer to the majority of these questions is YES, you are most likely dealing with a scholarly journal.