



# Periodical Primer: Basic Concepts and Article Types



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## What Is a Periodical?

- A Periodical Is:** A publication that is published periodically on a more-or-less regular schedule.
- Periodicals Include:** Newspapers, popular magazines, scholarly peer-reviewed journals, yearbooks, newsletters, annual reports, Internet newspapers and magazines, and blogs.
- A Volume Number Is:** The number assigned to all of the issues of a periodical published during a specified time period, typically a year.
- An Issue Number Is:** The number assigned to each individual periodical published within a volume, typically numbered sequentially.
- Articles Are:** The individual pieces of writing included in each issue, typically listed in the table of contents.

## How Are Popular Magazines and Peer-Reviewed Journals Different?

Peer-reviewed periodicals contain articles *written and reviewed by specialists* (e.g., college professors), and typically are more authoritative sources for your research.

Characteristics	Peer-Reviewed	Popular
How can you tell the difference between these two types of periodicals?		
<b>Length</b>	Longer articles, providing in-depth analysis of topics	Shorter articles, providing broader overviews of topics
<b>Authorship</b>	Author usually an expert or specialist in the field, name and credentials always provided	Author usually a staff writer or a journalist, name and credentials often not provided
<b>Language/Audience</b>	Written in the jargon of the field for scholarly readers (professors, researchers or students)	Written in non-technical language for anyone to understand
<b>Format/Structure</b>	Articles usually more structured, may include these sections: <i>abstract, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, bibliography</i>	Articles do not necessarily follow a specific format or structure
<b>Special Features</b>	Illustrations that support the text, such as tables of statistics, graphs, maps, or photographs	Illustrations with glossy or color photographs, usually for advertising purposes
<b>Editors</b>	Articles usually reviewed and critically evaluated by a board of experts in the field (refereed)	Articles are not evaluated by experts in the field, but by editors on staff
<b>Credits</b>	A bibliography (works cited) and/or footnotes are always provided to document research thoroughly	A bibliography (works cited) is usually not provided, although names of reports or references may be mentioned in the text

## Common Types of Article in Peer-Reviewed Journals

Adapted from Scanlon, Craig L. 2009. *Types of Articles in Professional Journals*. Retrieved from [http://www.umdj.edu/idsweb/shared/types\\_of\\_articles.htm](http://www.umdj.edu/idsweb/shared/types_of_articles.htm).

### **Primary or Original Research Articles:**

Primary or original research studies commonly include original research performed by the author(s). Examples of primary or original research are laboratory experiments, clinical trials, case-control studies, cohort studies, survey research, methodological studies and evaluation research. Some journals also report conference proceeding and/or abstracts.

### **Review Articles:**

Review articles review and assess a body of research presented in other primary or original research articles. There are two types of review articles: non-systematic (or journalistic) reviews and systematic reviews. *Non-systematic or journalistic reviews* provide a summary of evidence derived from primary or original research studies that have been selected and synthesized according to the author's personal and professional perspective. Non-systematic reviews can cover a wide range of subject matter at various levels of completeness and comprehensiveness. *Systematic reviews*, on the other hand, provide summaries of related primary studies that have been searched for, evaluated, and selected and reported according to a rigorous and predefined methodology.

### **Meta-Analyses:**

A meta-analysis is an integrative study that statistically combines the numeric results of several separate studies addressing the same question into a single estimate of their combined effect (commonly referred to as 'pooling data'). Typically, the results are presented as a graph depicting the individual and pooled odds ratios (with confidence intervals) for all studies included in the analysis.

### **Book Reviews:**

A book review is a form of literary criticism in which a book is reviewed and assessed based on content, style, and merit. A review's length may vary from a single paragraph to a substantial essay. Shorter reviews may offer only a simple plot summary. Longer reviews often contain evaluations of the book based on professional or disciplinary standards and assess the book's arguments, theories, methods, and/or claims in terms of current professional literature and opinion.

### **Editorials:**

An editorial is a short paper written by either the journal's editor(s) or by a guest editor that addresses an issue of interest to a journal's readership. Editorials may serve to introduce topics covered within a journal issue, present opposing opinions, clarify positions, or provide readers with updated information on new methods or procedures.

### **Letters to the Editor:**

A letter to the editor represents a (usually) brief communication submitted in response to an article previously published in the source journal. Some letters in some journals (e.g., *Lancet*) include extensive commentary with careful referencing to the literature and thus may serve as a valuable source to the primary research literature.