Typically, no matter what citation style you use, you still need to use critical thinking skills to evaluate the source. This is especially true with online-only sources or non-academic journals. In fact, some instructors will restrict the type of research you conduct to only “peer-reviewed” or “scholarly” material.

Always be on the alert when skimming through various sites. **Always check the following:**

**Authorship:**
• What type of site have you located? Confirm if it is a personal page (.net) or blog, a company site (.com),
 an organization (.org), or an educational institution (.edu)?
• Do not forget government sites as resources (.gov).

**Accuracy:**
• Does the author cite reliable sources for his or her facts?
• How does the information compare with that in other works written about this topic?

**Authority/Objectivity:**
• What are the author's qualifications for writing on this subject?
• Is he or she connected with an organization that has an established reputation?
• Is the author affiliated with a particular organization that might have a bias?

*from:* [*http://libguides.uco.edu*](http://libguides.uco.edu)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristics** | **Scholarly Articles** | **Popular Magazine** |
| **Appearance** | Sober and seriousNo advertisementsMay contain graphs or chartsDoes not include glossy pages or photographs | Attractive appearanceAdvertisementsHeavily illustratedGlossy paper |
| **Audience** | Scholars and students | General audience |
| **Authors** | Scholars in the field of study | Reporters, usually not experts on the subject |
| **Documentation** | Sources cited in footnotes and/or bibliography | Sources not cited or cited informally |
| **Purpose** | Report results of original research or experimentation | Provide general information |
| **Article AcceptanceProcedure** | Many (but not all\*) scholarly journals are "peer review" journals - articles undergo a rigorous examination by other scholars in the field before being published. | Written by hired reporters, edited by magazine editors, and published. |
| **Example journals** | *Medicine & Science in Sports & ExerciseJournal of Sports MedicineInternal Journal of Sport Psychology* | *Sports IllustratedCoach and Athletic DirectorBicycling* |
| **Example articles** | [Peer-reviewed article example](http://ucolibinstruction.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/supplement-schol.pdf) | [Popular article example](http://ucolibinstruction.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/supplements.pdf) |

\*Peer review = reviewed by peers independent of the journal. On the other hand the term “scholarly” means the journal is not peer reviewed but has an editorial staff knowledgeable in the field.