

Books vs. journals, newspapers & magazines

Information can be found in different formats. For your assignments, you should typically consult and cite a mix of books and periodicals (journals, newspapers, and magazines, which are published "periodically"). Knowing the difference between them will help you determine what's best—the most relevant and useful—for your assignment.

Books

In-depth and broad examination of a topic

Longer lag between an event or discovery and a book's publication. As a result...

- More complete information (causes, effects, long-term consequences, fuller conclusions, etc.)
- Deeper analysis
- Broader historical perspective; more contextual both within and outside of a discipline

Contain original research that may cover multiple experiments or span several years

More cumulative coverage of a topic

Longer: 100 to several hundred pages

Published once, though revised editions may come out later

Journals, Newspapers and Magazines

May be in-depth but only on a specific topic

Cover recent developments and events with little time lapse. As a result...

- Information is current but may be incomplete
- Captures "the spirit of the moment" (especially newspapers and magazines)
- Journals are important for reporting fast-paced, competitive or time-sensitive research

Journals have original research and typically focus on one experiment; newspapers and magazines may refer to research studies, but do not contain original research

Limited coverage without much historical overview or context

Shorter: a few hundred words (newspaper articles) up to around 30 pages (journal articles)

Composed of volumes and issues published on a regular basis