

Understanding Scholarly Research

Identifying and Reading Scholarly Articles

Title and Introduction

Use the **MENU** to jump to other sections in the tutorial. Additional resources can be found under the **RESOURCES** tab. **PRACTICE QUESTIONS** will be included in the tutorial to help you better understand the information as you go.

Reading scholarly articles can seem intimidating, but it doesn't have to be! Today we will go over tips to make identifying, reading, and understanding articles more manageable. We're going to learn how to identify a scholarly article, what the different parts of a scholarly article are and then go over ways to read each part quickly and efficiently. Finally, we will look at a few ways to keep track of what you learn from scholarly articles so you can use that information in your research assignment.

What is a Scholarly Article?

First, we need to define what we mean by a "scholarly" article. Scholarly articles come from academic or professional journals and are written by experts in their particular field. These articles are based on extensive research and many include an original study performed by the authors. Scholarly articles include a broad reference section, and most are peer-reviewed by other experts in the field before they are ever published.

Peer-Review

Peer-review is a process of judging or refereeing articles before they are published. Other experts in the field review the article and make suggestions for edits and revisions before publication in a scholarly journal. Peer-review is completed to guarantee the quality of the articles that are published and follow the methods of the field.

Type of Scholarly Articles

There are different types of scholarly articles. The main two you'll probably find are empirical articles and review articles. Both kinds of articles can be considered scholarly, but depending on the guidelines of your research assignment you may need to use one type over the other.

Empirical Articles

Empirical articles – also known as primary research articles in the sciences or evidence-based research articles - are written about studies based on actual observations or experiments. The research may be quantitative and generate numerical data for analysis or it may be qualitative and analyze behaviors, beliefs, feelings or values with few or no numerical data.

Empirical articles have very specific sections that detail the study or experiment. We will look at the information found in each of these sections in a few minutes.

Review Articles

Unlike empirical articles, review articles don't focus on one particular study or experiment. Instead, they attempt to sum up the current state of the research on a particular topic. Review articles will give you information on the main people working in a field, recent advances and discoveries, significant gaps in the research, current debates or opposing theories in the field, and ideas of where research might go next. These articles are a great place to get a basic idea about a topic and the reference lists can lead you to empirical articles that can advance your research.

Quick Review

Time for a quick review, answer the next two questions based on the information we just covered.

Reading a Scholarly Article

Have you ever found yourself nodding off or spacing out when reading a scholarly article? Does it seem like you get to the end of the article and have no clue what you just read? In the next few slides, I am going to give you some tips on how to better understand the different parts of a scholarly article, what to look for when you are reading, and how to keep track of the important points in each article so you don't have to read the article more times than needed.

Before you begin reading...

Before you even begin reading your articles, make sure you know what your research question, argument, or thesis statement is and keep it in mind at all times. What kind of information do you need to support your argument or prove your hypothesis? What do you want to inform your readers about concerning

your topic? What questions do you need to answer about your research question? What arguments could be made against the points you want to make? Be aware that you'll need articles that support and refute your opinion. Have an open mind and choose articles with different points of view.

Having these questions in your mind while you read can help you identify important information within the articles that you can use when you begin writing your assignment and save you so much time!

What is it saying?

Once you know what you want to find in the scholarly articles, it's time to start reading. Most empirical articles adhere to a standard format for presenting information. Click on each icon to learn more about the different sections of an evidence-based article and what pieces of information to look for in each section. You must visit each section before you can move on with the module.

Citation & Abstract

This section will include the authors of the article and their credentials, such as job title and organization they work for. It will also include the title of the article, journal name, publication date, volume and issue number of the journal, and the page numbers. This information will usually be at the top or bottom of the first page of the article, but it may be included somewhere else.

The abstract is a short summary of the article and it should give you the key points that will be covered in the rest of the article. If it's an empirical article, the abstract will give you information on the study that was done. If it's a review article, it will tell you what topic is being covered and why.

Introduction

The introduction will give you background on the study or experiment being performed, including the research questions being asked or the thesis of the authors' argument or the goal of their research. It might also tell you about the historical context of a problem or why the study is important in the field.

Literature Review

The literature review tells us who the key players are in this research area and their relevant studies. The review should also identify gaps in the research and tell

us why this study will give us new or different information. If the article isn't empirical, the entire article will involve this type of review.

Methods

The methods section tells us who or what is being studied and how the study was conducted. It will also explain how the results will be recorded for analysis after the study is finished and will include any ethical or safety procedures for working with people, animals or substances. The text itself will be highly technical and will assume you are familiar with the topic. Jargon, abbreviations and technical terms may be used without definition.

Findings/Results

The findings will tell us the results of the study for the research questions being asked. This section often includes charts, graphs or images to relay the results visually. This section should only focus on results that apply to the research questions, thesis, or argument as presented in the introduction.

Discussion & Conclusion

The discussion looks critically at the findings and gives interpretations on the how and why of the results. Comparisons may be made between groups in the study or to other similar studies and will present the implications or significance of the results for the field. The conclusion provides an overall debrief of the study's process and findings. Recommendations are often made for future research based on the results of the current study.

References

The reference list includes sources specifically cited in the paper by the authors. These could be journal articles, books, or other scholarly sources. This is a great place to find additional resources for your own research.

When you're reading

When you start reading your article, stop and read the abstract first. How might this information work in your research paper? Is the information relevant to your questions or the ideas you want to prove?

Skim through the article. Look at the conclusion or discussion sections to see if the author's main points relate to your question. Focus on the parts of the discussion that you need more information about. Look for more information on

these points in the earlier sections of the article. You might be able to skim over other parts if you don't think they are relevant to your topic.

Remember that academic articles are full of technical language and jargon, so it's ok if you don't understand everything in the article. Make sure to give yourself enough time to read the article two or three times so you can be sure you understand what the authors are trying to say.

Think critically about what you read and try to build your own argument using the information you find in the article.

Take Notes!

Taking notes while you read will save you time because you won't have to go back and re-read the article when you are ready to write your paper.

Write summarizing notes in the margin or in a separate document about important or main points from the article. Try doing this in your own words so that when you begin writing you already have a summary of the article that you can understand.

Only highlight very important sections or quotes. If you do highlight a sentence or quote, be sure to write down why you highlighted it and how it ties into your research topic.

After you read...

These three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing differ according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing.

Quotations must be identical to the original, using a small piece of the text. They must match the source document word for word. Quotes should be used sparingly and only to highlight the most important points of an article.

Summarizing involves putting the main ideas of an article into your own words. You should include only the main points of the article so summaries are usually much shorter than the original and cover a broad overview of the source material. You would normally summarize in your writing when you only need one or two sources for your assignment.

Paraphrasing involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. It's usually more detailed than a summary because it takes one key idea

from an article and cuts it down to its most important points. Paraphrasing is a great way to blend multiple articles on the same topic into one paragraph or section of your paper.

No matter how you choose to include your articles into your paper or assignment, you **MUST** provide citations letting your readers know where the information came from.

Practice Slides

For the next practice slides, place the red X and the appropriate section of the article below.

End Slide

Congratulations! You've completed the Understanding Scholarly Research module. You can review your answers to the practice questions and print your results using the buttons below.

If you have questions about scholarly articles or research in general, please contact the library using the ASK US button.