

Gathering Sources

- Use only peer-reviewed scholarly journals.
- Begin constructing your reference list in APA format right away to help save time.
- Be sure to include recently published journals. Journals more than 30 years old should not be included unless you are reviewing classic works of psychology. The field of psychology is quite young, so new findings are quite frequent!

Searching for Journals

- It is best to search for scholarly journals using an author search. Use your text to find the names of key researchers in the particular area you are studying.
- Key word searches are useful too. Use the index of your text to find suitable key words.
- If you find yourself stuck, use the reference list of the scholarly journals you have already found; it is a great tool, as it will include only relevant journals.

A Selection of Popular Psychology Journal

- *Canadian Psychology*
- *Cognitive Science Research Papers*
- *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*
- *Journal of Developmental Psychology*
- *Journal of Experimental Psychology*
- *Neuropsychologia*
- *Psychological Bulletin*

Be Critical of the Literature

- What are the limitations of the studies? Never claim that a study lacks limitations!
 - Are there problems with validity?
 - Are the results statistically significant? This does not mean, “Are the results important?” Instead, statistical significance concerns the degree to which results among the experimental conditions are large enough to be considered significant.
 - Are any biases evident?
- It may be helpful to find peer-reviewed critiques.

Writing a Thesis

- You should do a significant amount of research before constructing your thesis.
- Your thesis should be based around experimental results, e.g. “It is clear that violent television leads to an increase in aggressive behaviour in children, as illustrated by the research conducted by Smith, Howard and Thomson.”
- Never use “I think.” Only empirical evidence should be used to construct your thesis; therefore, there is no room for speculation.

Comparing and Contrasting Research

- How do the sources you use differ?
 - Are the findings similar? If not, why? If yes, how are they similar?
 - Are similar samples used (gender, age, socioeconomic status, race, culture)?

- Are the methods used similar?
- Be wary of comparing correlational research with experimental research. Correlational research cannot reveal anything causal, whereas experimental research can.

Some Great Key Words You Might Like to Include

Internal Validity

e.g. The research has weak internal validity because of a confounding variable.

External Validity

e.g. The research is externally valid because it employed random selection. Therefore, the results may be used to represent individuals beyond the sample used.

Hypothesis

e.g. Harlow's hypothesis that baby monkeys will cling to a mother who provides food was false.

Experimental Design

e.g. The researchers used a longitudinal experimental design to study the development of language.

Experimental Condition

e.g. The participants were randomly assigned among three different conditions.