

Critiquing Journal Articles

The first thing to do when you are reviewing or critiquing a journal article is to read the paper through a couple of times THOROUGHLY. Look at the statistics, figures and tables as well as the text. As you are reading, jot notes, comments and thoughts on the paper.

There may be the need to be prepared to do some extra work here: if you do not know about a theory, method, statistic, debate, etc., that an author mentions, find out from somewhere else!

When considering or critiquing a journal article, be sure to consider ALL sections. Some important questions to think about are listed below:

- Does each section meet the requirements?
- Does the research question cover a 'gap' in the existing literature?
 - If not, why not? Is this a review paper, meta-analysis, etc?
- Consider the sample or participants that have been used – is it appropriate to answer the question?
- Consider the methods that have been used
 - Are they appropriate for the study?
- Is there anything that could have been improved in the study?
- Does the study include a lot of assumptions?
 - If so, should they have been considered and researched first?
- Who is the author of the article?
- What are the good things about the article?
 - Do the findings support the hypothesis, for example?
 - Do the results of the study add to existing literature?
- If the article has added to the body of existing knowledge:
 - What relationship does it bear to other works in the field / same area?
 - What is missing or has not been stated?
 - Is this a problem?
- What did the research do that increased its validity / reliability?
- What was the aim of the author with this article?
- To what extent has the aim been achieved?
- What approach has been used?
 - How objective is this approach given the research question / topic area?
- What claims have been made?
- Is the argument consistent?
- What evidence has the article relied on?
- What conclusions have been drawn?
 - Are these justified and supported?
- Has the source been published in a well-known / recommended journal?
- Is there likely to be any bias?
 - E.g., funding sources?
 - If so, does the bias matter?
- Is there a strong bibliography / reference list
- Is it clear throughout where evidence has come from?
- Is the source from a publisher that is respected in your subject area?
 - E.g., information from newspapers or from friends is not considered reliable