

READING AT DEGREE LEVEL

Study Skills for Psychology

AIMS:

- Consider primary and secondary sources
- Look at methods for searching for relevant texts and articles
- Conducting a literature review
- Introduction to journals and critical thinking / writing skills
- Reading tips

WHY DO WE NEED TO RESEARCH?

- Carrying out a **literature search** is another key skill for psychology students.
- Basically, a 'literature search' is a general or focused search of all (or selected) published material within a field in an attempt to find specific information on a topic, theory, author or debate.



PRIMARY SOURCES

- Primary sources are original materials, created at the time of an event or soon after
- Usually created (written) by those who saw an event, or collected data themselves



SECONDARY SOURCES

- Secondary sources describe, interpret, analyse, evaluate, explain, or comment on a primary source or event. Secondary sources are removed from and are often written after-the-fact, with hindsight.

Benefits of Secondary data

Saves cost and time

Involves very little time, effort and money.

When research projects are not feasible, secondary data will be the only solution.

In some cases, secondary data may be more accurate than primary data.

EXAMPLES OF PRIMARY RESOURCES

- Conferences, meetings.
- Data sets and statistics.
- Original correspondence, including email.
- Some Government documents.
- Empirical studies (research based on scientific and experimental results – typically located in Journal Articles).
- Technical reports.
- Dissertations and theses (when based on original research).

EXAMPLES OF SECONDARY RESOURCES

- Lectures
- Textbooks
- Edited Books (unless reporting on empirical research)
- Critical Literature Reviews
- Meta Analysis Journal Articles
- Articles of opinion
- Biographies

WHICH IS STRONGER?

- Research gains credibility and respect when it is founded on authentic evidence, empirical data, original documents, rather than on interpretations, explanations and opinions.
- Interpretations (Secondary) can be bias and less accurate – although hindsight and a review can be a good thing.

REFERENCES CITED IN LECTURES / MODULES

- Modules will have a list of recommended reading - and they are recommended for a reason!
- Lectures themselves will have references
 - Look for / locate
- At level four, we often use secondary sources. But by level five (and certainly at level six) we tend to divert you away from the use of secondary sources and encourage you to use far more primary sources
 - Particularly in the form of journal articles

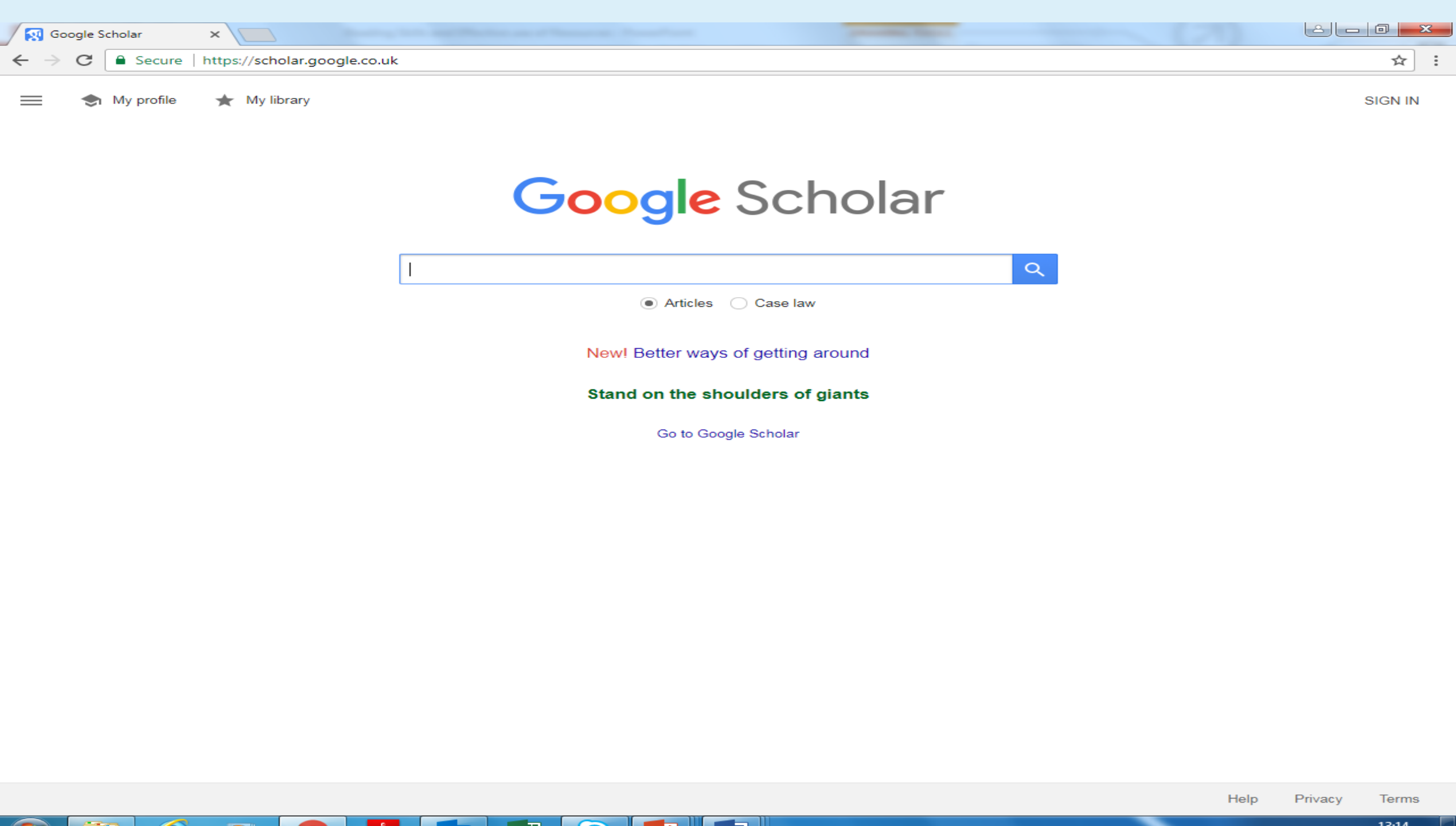
SEARCHING FOR SOURCES

I. Use the internet

- BUT – be very careful - **AVOID** generic or non-academic sites
- **Keywords** are an important part of refining internet searches
- Important skill to learn how to filter through many 'hits' in order to find pertinent information
- Google Scholar is a good place to start



<http://scholar.google.com>



SEARCHING FOR SOURCES

2. Use the UWTSD library

- When using the library catalogue, you have an option to search ALL available stock by title or keyword in the advanced search area
- Title search = limits to words in the title
- Keyword search = words relating to the topic you're exploring, not necessarily in the title

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/catalogue>

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USING THE ONLINE LIBRARY



CATALOGUE

- Searches everything in the library database
 - Books, journals, papers, etc
- Useful to use keywords here, or the use of full title if you know it
- Will show whether sources are available to view online

DATABASES

- The library subscribes to a large number of online databases which can give you access to thousands of full text journal articles in the field of Psychology.
- Databases are useful because this can reduce the time it takes to search as it does code them into subject categories.

<http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/online-library/databases-by-subject/>

Academic Search Premier

A leading multidisciplinary research database. It provides acclaimed full-text journals, magazines and other valuable resources. Subject coverage includes psychology.

Medline

Contains references to over 3800 biomedical journals, from 1966 onwards. Covers all aspects of medicine with a worldwide focus.

Oxford Scholarship

A searchable full-text database of scholarly books in a range of subjects including Psychology.

ProQuest Central

Access databases from all major subject areas , including business, health and medical, social sciences, arts and humanities, education, science and technology, and religion. The collection includes thousands of full-text scholarly journals, newspapers, magazines, dissertations, working papers, and market reports all together on a powerful, user-friendly platform.

PsychArticles

PsycARTICLES is a psychology database of full-text articles from journals published by the American Psychological Association, the APA Educational Publishing Foundation, the Canadian Psychological Association, and Hogrefe Publishing Group.

Science Direct

Access to thousands of journals articles and book chapters published by Elsevier on subjects such as Physical Sciences & Engineering, Life Sciences, Health Sciences and Social Sciences & Humanities.

OTHER TIPS FOR RESEARCHING

- Look at reference sections of books and articles
- E.g.,
 - If you find a really good/specific article or book that precisely addresses the issues you're interested in, look to see what the author has cited. From here, check the library or a database and see if you can locate the original sources.
- Look at abstracts and/or summaries

OTHER TIPS FOR RESEARCHING

- If you have found a good article you can, in most web based databases, do a cited reference search. This means you can find out where this paper is cited - who else has referred to it in their work. This gives you another method of following the reference trail. You can also search to see who has cited a particular journal or author.

CRITICAL THINKING

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

- A process that evaluates ideas through the testing of statements (accuracy) and the soundness of reasoning behind them
 - Not accepting everything you read at face value!
 - Training your mind to think differently

**What else would
we like to ask this
magazine about
this statement?**



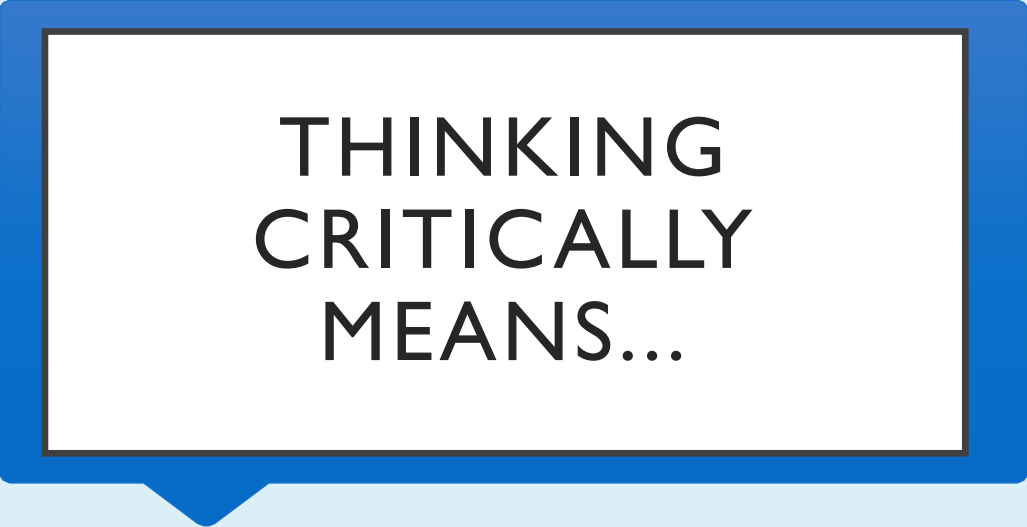
30%... is how much more
likely you are to be depressed
if you watch more than 3
hours of TV a day"

Zest Magazine, 2012

**How reliable is this
source??**

CRITICAL THINKING

- Everyone can be critical!
 - Involves questioning
 - Children do this all the time
- Be confident in your own interpretation, but also have the confidence to challenge yourself and your own opinions



THINKING CRITICALLY MEANS...

1. Examining different viewpoints
2. Learning to think from different perspectives
3. Viewing those opinions that are different from yours
4. Avoiding automatic responses

SO – WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Keep an open mind
- Identify key issues and raise questions
- Obtain relevant facts
- Evaluate the findings and form judgements

**What can we
KNOW?**

“I get frustrated with my Psychology classes. We study the ‘theory’ of this and the ‘principle’ of that. Aren’t there any laws? Why can’t psychologists make up their minds and stop acting like they don’t know anything for sure?”

CRITICAL THINKING IS NOT JUST CRITICISING

- Critical thinking is a vital skill for a psychology student
- It is **NOT** just 'slating' an article
 - Highlight the negatives in a constructive and professional way
 - BUT – highlight the positives too!

CRITICAL VIEW

- Imagine you're reviewing papers for a journal – a paper has faults which you need to point out, but you also need to say *how* it could be better...
- You have to leave the author with the will to carry on!!
- Also remember that if the paper is published in a peer reviewed experts' have agreed that the paper is good enough to be published. It doesn't mean it's perfect necessarily but does mean that it isn't hopeless!!
- But also, some journals are better than others and more reputable ones have higher standards.

JOURNALS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

WHY ARE JOURNALS IMPORTANT?

- Considered to be the ‘strongest’ sources for use in your assignments
 - They are not all articles without criticism
- Textbooks are **not** peer-reviewed
 - But some edited books are..
- Contain the most up-to-date information. Contain the latest research on any specific topic
 - Without journals – psychology would be standing still

PEER REVIEWED?

- *Peer review* is the evaluation of creative work or performance by other people in the same field in order to maintain or enhance the quality of the work or performance in that field.
 - Typical 2 – 3 peers for each article.
- Careful though – not all Journals are peer reviewed.
 - Check the guidelines on the journals website.

CONTENTS OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE

- **Title and author/s**
 - What the article is about
- **Abstract** (summary)
 - Very brief summary of the whole article
- **Introduction**
 - Introduces the topic of the article
 - What the article contributes to existing knowledge on the topic
 - Review of literature
 - Hypothesis
- **Method**
 - Who, what, when, how
 - Sample / participants
 - Methods used / employed
 - Type of analysis
 - Procedure

CONTENTS OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE

- **Results / Findings**
 - What were the findings?
 - Tables and graphs
 - Were findings significant?
 - What does this mean?
- **Discussion**
 - What the results mean
 - How do the findings contribute to knowledge?
 - Are the hypotheses supported or rejected?
 - Problems / limitations of the study
- **Conclusion** (not always separate heading)
 - Importance of research
 - Future research
- **References**
- **Appendices**

SOME FINAL READING TIPS

- Look for information that relates most exactly to your assignment (title)
- Draw up a trial essay plan and see what information you will need
 - What came up in the lecture/seminar?
- Check the back cover of the book, contents list and index to see exactly what the book covers
- Quickly scan the introduction and/or conclusion: these may even provide all the information you need
- Browse through the headings to get a feel for the book

SOME FINAL READING TIPS

- Is the source a well-known one in the field, such as a recommended journal?
- Is the source likely to be biased? If so, does the bias matter in this case?
- Does the text have a good bibliography/reading list?
- Is it clear where any evidence comes from?
- Is the source from a publisher respected in your subject area? Information in newspapers or from friends is not usually considered reliable.
 - Consider when sourcing information from the Web too!