

ECPS4018

Reading Skills and Effective Use of Resources

Aims of the Lecture.



To consider Primary and Secondary Resources.



To look at methods for searching for relevant texts and articles.



To consider conducting a literature review.



An introduction to Journals and Critical Thinking / Writing Skills.



To consider some 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. They are usually created by those who saw an event or collected data themselves.

Forcing All Issues

End of Year Questionnaire

Dear parents/ carers,

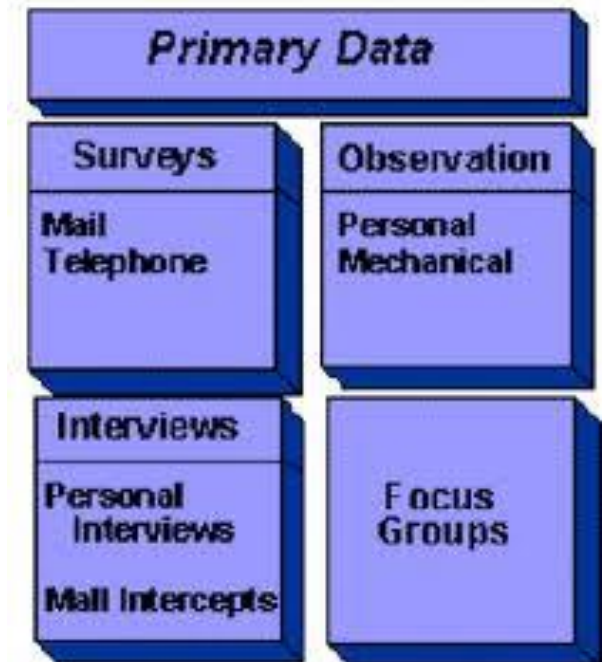
As you know, we are always pleased to hear your views & opinions about any aspect of school life. To help us make further improvements, we would be very grateful indeed if you would take time to fill in this paper copy to the usual questions posed by OFSTED. We hope to use this information to give us an overall view of how you as parents & carers feel that things are going, as well as highlighting any issues that you feel may have been raised.

Please note that as parents & carers, you can utilise the online questionnaire, **Parent View**, which has replaced the paper questionnaire that is often used to collect the views of a school's inspection to gather parents' views. The Parent View questionnaire can be accessed at any time but just during an inspection on: <http://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Please send this completed paper copy to the school office by Friday 10th July so that the results can be collected & help us with our planning for next year. Thank you so much in anticipation!

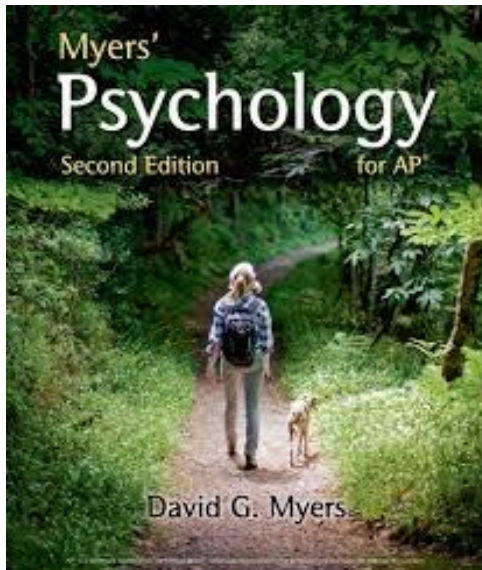
Working in the education of your child,
Kerick Sargent

How far do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Any comments about this particular statement?
1. My child is happy at this school					
2. My child feels safe at this school					
3. My child makes good progress at this school					
4. My child is well looked after at this school					
5. My child is taught well at this school					
6. My child receives appropriate homework for their age					
7. This school makes sure that					



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 the Lecture / Module.

- * Module Outline will have a list of recommended reading – and they are recommended for a reason!
- * Lectures themselves – will have references, look and locate.
- * At level four (first year) they are often secondary, but by level five and six we use mostly primary sources (particularly in the form of Journal articles).

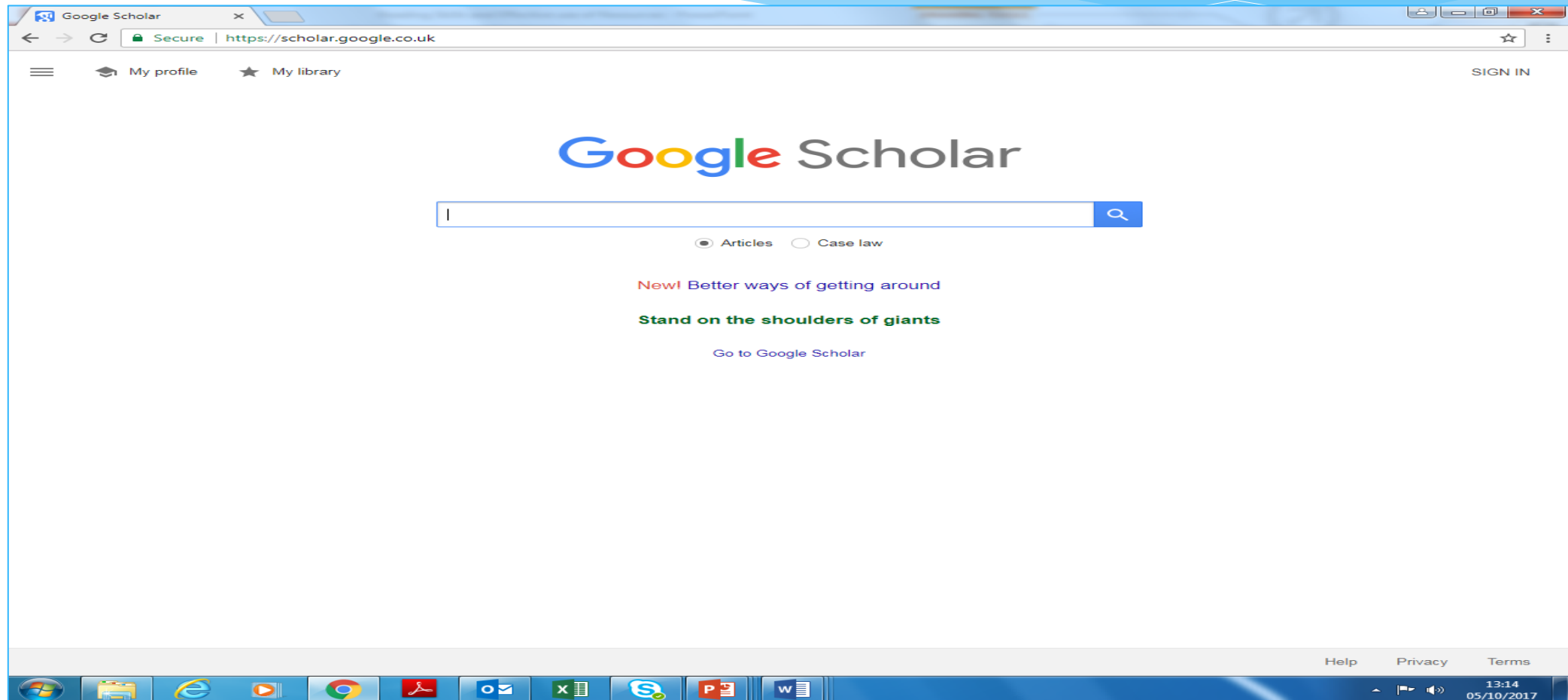


Keyword or Title Searches

- * Use the internet!!!! **BUT** be very careful... **AVOID** generic or non academic sites.
- * Keywords are an important part of refining Internet searches.
- * It is important to learn how to filter through in order to find pertinent information.
- * Learning how to search for relevant and appropriate sources is a skill which develops with time!
- * Google Scholar is a good starting point.
- * <http://scholar.google.com>



Google Scholar – Standing on the Shoulder of Giants



Also in the UWTSD Library



When using the library catalogue, you have an option to search ALL stock by title or keyword in the advance search area.



Title search = limits to words in the title.



Keyword search = words relating to the topic of book not necessarily in title.



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

[UWTSD Home](#) - Library and Learning Resources

Library and Learning Resources

Your University Library offers digital and print collections, Online Resource Lists, InfoSkills and Digital Skills training, learning spaces, and online and face-to-face support from our knowledgeable and friendly staff. Choose an option below to find out more.



Search our collections

[Advanced Search](#)



Using the UWTSD LRC Online Library



Datasets and 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.



<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/getting-started-guides/psychology-and-counselling/databases-psychology-and-counselling/>



Databases: Psychology and Counselling

You can find content within the databases we subscribe to by using the [library catalogue](#), select search eResources from the drop down menu in the search bar.

For help with searching the databases or designing a search strategy please check our [Infoskills](#) area or contact your [Academic Liaison Librarian](#).

To explore the databases available to you please click on the button below. To access resources you will need your UWTSD username and password.

EXPLORE PSYCHOLOGY & COUSSELLING DATABASES

In this section

Databases: Psychology and Counselling

- ✦ Journals: Psychology and Counselling
- ✦ Books: Psychology and Counselling
- ✦ Other Resources: Psychology and Counselling



Useful E-Databases available at the LRC

- * Academic Search Primer
 - * All areas of Psychology
- * PsycARTICLES
 - * All areas of Psychology
- * Proquest Central
 - * All areas of Psychology
- * Medline
 - * Medical Areas (Health Psychology / Biological Psychology)
- * SportsDiscus
 - * Sport, Exercise and Health Psychology

UWTSD Online Library



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



The online library website give you access to the Databases, E-Books, Open Access Resources and E Journals that the University subscribes too.



There is free access to Thousands of relevant Psychology journals articles for you.

Other tips for Researching



Another way to extend your search for information is to look at the reference sections of books and articles.



In particular, if you find a really good and specific article / book that precisely addresses the issues you're interested in, look to see what the author has cited. From here, check the library, or, using a searchable database, have a look at the abstract or summary.

Similarly

- * 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.

References

- This is the list of all references cited in the research paper.
- The pattern of writing the references depends upon the kind of journal in which we are going to publish.
- The general format most journals follow is as:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year).
Title of article. Title of Journal, xx, xxx-xxx.

- The journal title and the volume number are in italics. Issue numbers are not required if the journal is continuously paged. If paged individually, the issue number is required and is in regular type in parentheses adjacent to the volume number.

What is a Critical Review

- * The critical review is a writing task that asks you to summarise and evaluate a text. The critical review can be of a book, a chapter, or a journal article. Writing the critical review usually requires you to read the selected text in detail and to also read other related texts so that you can present a fair and reasonable evaluation of the selected text.



What is a Journal

- * Periodicals in which researchers publish articles of their work.
 - * Reports of Research
 - * Theoretical Discussion/Arguments
 - * Review of Literature.
 - * Review of another Study.
 - * Opinionated pieces of work.
- * Peer Reviewed.
- * Each journal will consist of a number of “journal articles” within each edition.
 - * Careful – some academics are lazy and will call a journal article a “journal”. E.G. “Find Jones (2011) Journal on living with COPD”.

What does Peer Reviewed mean

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.

Careful though – not all Journals are peer reviewed.

- Typical 2 – 3 peers for each article.

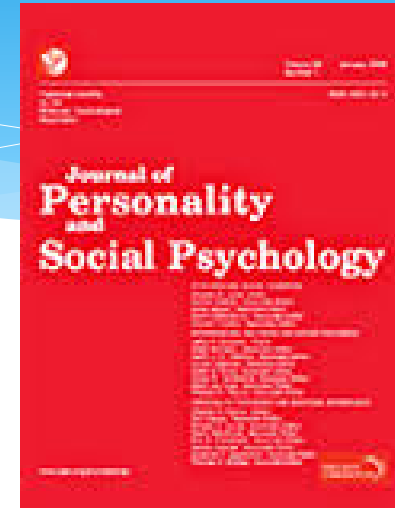
- Check the guidelines on the journals website.

Why are Journals Important?

- * Considered the “Strongest” Sources.
 - * Not all articles without criticism.
- * Text books are not peer reviewed.
 - * Although some edited books are.
- * Most up to date information. We get to hear about the latest research on a specific topic.
 - * Without journals – Psychology would be standing still.

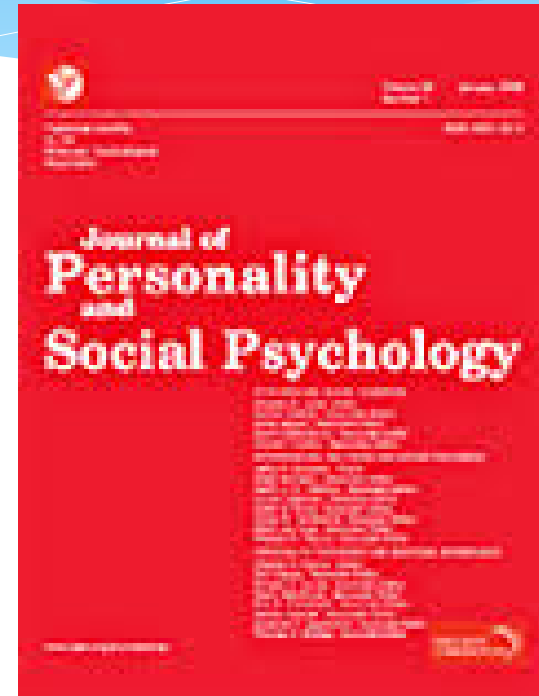
What is in a Journal Article.

- * **Title & Author/s**
 - * What the article is
- * **Abstract / Summary**
 - * Very briefly summarises the whole article.
- * **Introduction**
 - * Introduces the topic of the article completely
 - * What the article contributes to existing knowledge on the topic
 - * Review of Literature
 - * Hypothesis
- * **Methods and Data**
 - * How did the Author's go about answering the question
 - * Sample
 - * Methods Used
 - * What Analysis
 - * Procedure



What is in a Journal Article.

- * Results and Analysis
 - * What were the findings?
 - * Tables and Graphs
 - * Were Findings Significant?
- * Discussion
 - * What the results mean
 - * How do the findings contribute to knowledge?
 - * Are Hypothesis supported or rejected?
 - * Problems with Study
- * Conclusion
 - * Importance of research
 - * Future research
- * References
- * Appendices



Critical Review

- * Critical thinking is a vital skill for a Psychology student
 - * Not just 'slating' an article
 - * Highlight the positive too
 - * Present negative points in a constructive and professional way
- * 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.



Are the researchers over-stating their results?



What aren't they telling you?

e.g., how many people dropped out of their study and why?



Is there another explanation for the results they've found?

e.g., confounding variables not measured



So what?

Why should we care about this research?

What does it actually contribute to our knowledge or to improving anything for anybody in the real world?

How might it contribute in the future?



Could you do it better?

Think of sensible alternatives for methods, analyses

Think of alternative explanations for the results

Journal Review Tips

Read the paper through a couple of times – THOROUGHLY!

- Look at the statistics, figures and tables as well as the text
- As you read, jot down comments and thoughts in the margins of the paper

Be prepared to do some extra work here

- If you don't know about a theory, method, statistic, debate etc., that the authors mention, FIND OUT!!!
- Keep a separate 'to-do' list if you don't have the back up sources (e.g., stats book) to hand

When Considering / Critiquing a Journal Article.

- * Consider all sections.
- * Some important questions to consider:
 - * Does each section meet the requirements?
 - * Does the research question covers a “gap” in the existing literature?
 - * Consider the Sample Used – is it appropriate/wide enough to answer the question.
 - * Consider the Methods (e.g. Are they appropriate for the study).

Abstract

Journals vary in terms of how they constrain the author – some want stats, others don't, some have more stringent word limits than others

- If you're unsure, look for the journal on the web and look for 'guidelines for submissions'

Now you've read the paper through once or twice, do you think on reflection the abstract fairly reflects the paper?

- If you were hunting for a paper on the web about this topic, would the abstract lead or *mislead* you into reading it?
- Is the abstract vague or wrong about what was done, found, or concluded?
- Are the results over-stated?

Introduction

- * Should summarise the literature on the topic -
 - * Does this seem complete?
 - * Have they completely ignored opposing literature for example?
 - * Are their summaries of others' work fair?
 - * Read one or two key papers if you don't know anything about the area
- * Does their research question follow logically on from the other literature?
- * Are their aims and hypotheses outlined clearly towards the end of the introduction?

Methods

- * Is enough information supplied to replicate the study properly?
- * Where are the participants from?
 - * Are they using students, patients, elderly people? Are these the 'right' people given what they want to find out?
- * What are they actually measuring?
 - * Is it what they say they are measuring? e.g., if they're looking at anxiety, are they including an anxiety measure?
 - * Is the measure an existing and reliable one? e.g., have they just 'made up' a few questions for the study that haven't been used before?

Methods (cont.).

Are the methods appropriate?

- e.g.,. Measuring anxiety about taking a test AFTER it has taken place
- Did they counterbalance to control for order effects or practice effects?
- Was there a sensible control condition?
- Was there random assignment to conditions?

Is there a more sensible way of running this study?

- e.g., if questionnaires are used, could interviews, biological markers, tests etc., be used instead of or as well as these?
- If so, why? What would it contribute to the value of the research?

Results

- * You MUST get into the habit of reading these!!!
 - * It gets easier with practice!!
- * Results sections usually contain figures and/or tables
- * They should also include some text explanation of what is shown in the tables or figures
 - * Generally draws out the key results
- * Have they ignored non-significant results?
- * Have they ignored results that oppose their hypotheses?
 - * e.g., if relationships are in opposite direction to that proposed or if something is worse/the same after an intervention than it was before!
- * Do they talk about 'trends' as if they were significant results? (look for $p < .10$ or for the superscript [†] or dagger symbol)

Results (cont.).

- * Did they consider and control for type 1 error rate if they've done lots of analyses on the same data?
 - * More likely to get a significant result by chance...
 - * Usually apply a more stringent p-value (e.g., $p < .001$) so effect has to be stronger to be called significant
- * Are tables and figures clear and labelled in such a way that you can easily find your way around them?
- * Are you happy that the results answer the research question or support the hypothesis?
 - * Think for yourself!
 - * If you have doubts, write them down and bear them in mind when you study the discussion, to see if the researchers deal with them there

Discussion

- * Without simply repeating the results section, do the authors say clearly how the results do (not) support the hypotheses they stated in the introduction?
- * Do they gloss over or ignore or over interpret certain results?
 - * Do they talk about ‘marginal’ results or ‘trends’ as if they are significant and support the hypothesis? They should use provisos at the very least
 - * Do they only talk about supportive results and ignore the ones that don’t support their hypotheses?
- * Do they relate their results back to the material they cover in the introduction and say how it contributes to the knowledge in this area?
 - * If it opposes previous findings, how do they explain it?
 - * Is it a valuable contribution to the field? Will others read and use this paper when designing their own studies?

Discussion (cont.)

- * Do the researchers say anything that answers any of the concerns you had after reading the results?
- * Do they acknowledge the limitations of their own research (e.g., a measure they should have included?)
- * Do they acknowledge any confounding variables?
- * Do they deal with concerns in a satisfactory way?
 - * E.g., if lots of people have withdrawn from the study, do they try and explain it or ignore it? Is it normal for this type of sample and found in similar studies? Do they acknowledge that the research may not be generalisable because of this issue? And so on...
- * Do they say how future research could address any limitations?
 - * Do such strategies seem likely to solve any problems?
 - * Could they add new problems?

Critiquing the article

- * Things that could have been improved on the study.
- * Does the study use a lot of assumptions? If so, shouldn't they have been researched first.
- * Take a note of the Author.
- * Read around the subject, don't just read the article.
 - * Use other articles to back up your arguments,
 - * Look at how others have tackled research in a similar area – could this have been applied?

Critiquing the Article.

ALSO CONSIDER THE GOOD POINTS.



Things the research did that increased its validity / reliability.



Innovative Ideas and design.

Focus Points

- * What is the author's aim?
- * To what extent has this aim been achieved?

What does this text add to the body of knowledge? (This could be in terms of theory, data and/or practical application)

- * • What relationship does it bear to other works in the field?
- * • What is missing/not stated?
- * • Is this a problem?

Focus Points

- * What approach was used for the research? (eg; quantitative or qualitative, analysis/review of theory or current practice, comparative, case study, personal reflection etc....)
- * How objective/biased is the approach?

Focus Points



Are the results valid and reliable?



What analytical framework is used to discuss the results?



Is there a clear problem, statement or hypothesis?



What claims are made?

Focus Points



Is the argument consistent?



What kinds of evidence does the text rely on?



What conclusions are drawn?



- Are these conclusions justified?

So... how can you start to write critically?

- * Read the article over several times: it will not always make sense the first time!
- * Get a feel for the content overall and then start breaking down each section.
- * A simple model →



A more complex model:

R

RECOGNIZE ASSUMPTIONS

1. What is the key issue/problem that you are trying to solve?
2. What information and facts do you have about this issue?
3. What are your ideas and assumptions that support your strategy or plan?
4. Is there solid evidence to support those assumptions, and what might be some gaps in your reasoning?
5. Who are the key stakeholders and what are their viewpoints?
6. What other ideas should be explored?
7. What else do you need to know?

E

EVALUATE ARGUMENTS

1. What are the pros and cons of the solution you are proposing?
2. What are your biases?
3. Is there someone who has a different opinion that you could run your ideas by?
4. What impact will your decision have on others and how will you handle this?
5. What will be the financial impact of your decision?
6. Who would disagree with your proposed solution and what is the rationale that supports their viewpoint?
7. What key points or perspectives do you need to keep in mind as you evaluate the options?

D

DRAW CONCLUSIONS

1. After evaluating all of the facts, what is the best possible conclusion?
2. What specific evidence is driving your conclusion?
3. Is there new evidence that would impact your decision?
4. What does your common sense and experience tell you to do?
5. What is the timeline for making a decision (e.g., would your decision be different in a month)?
6. What opportunities does your conclusion provide?
7. What risks are associated with your conclusion?

So..... When we ask you to Critically Discuss / Critically Evaluate

- * It is using this critical thinking and is a vital skill for a Psychology student
 - * E.g. Not just 'slating' an article
 - * Highlight the positive too
 - * Present negative points in a constructive and professional way
 - * 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...
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 - * But also, some journals are better than others and more reputable ones have higher standards.

Other Things to Consider when Critically Writing

- * Assume Nothing.
 - * Write for an “intelligent idiot” – so YES, some description will be necessary.
- * Write in your own words – so you understand it.
- * Evaluate – Strengths and Limitations – Good points and points that could have been improved.
- * Use other sources to support your evaluation.
 - * For example – One limitation of Heaney’s (2011) research was the relatively low sample size of 11 participants, in an earlier study Walker (2009) had a sample size of 35 participants.
 - * EVIDENCE OF WIDER READING.

THE BIGGER PICTURE



Also consider the date of the theory / publication. For example, it's all very well using modern neuroimaging techniques to question (or critique) cognitive psychology theory – but let's not forget such techniques were around.



In addition, most researchers will be aware of limitations of their study, but try and consider “why” there are limitations before just labelling them as limitations

Finally.

Everyone can be critical! Being critical involves the ability to question - to ask 'why'. Children ask this all the time and so does everyone else.

Without our ability to criticise existing ideas and ways of doing things nothing would have ever changed! So, the first thing you need to know is that you can do it, in fact you are already doing 'it' and that it is good to be critical.

Therefore, be confident in your own interpretation.

Reading Tips!!!!

- * Look for information that relates most exactly to your assignment.
- * Draw up a trial essay plan and see what information you will need which came up the in lectures and seminars?
- * Check the back cover of the book, the contents list and index so see what the book covers.
- * Quickly scan the intro or conclusion: these may even provide all the information you need.
- * Browse through the headings to get a feel for the book.

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 the previous point when sourcing information from the Web too.