A Short Guide to Scholarly Research:
How to Understand & Cite Articles in Academic Journals

What is Scholarly Research?

Scholarly research refers to systematic investigation by experts and practitioners (called scholars) in various fields of study.

All disciplines and professions, from nursing and social work to law and criminology, have scholars that conduct research to discover facts, prove or refine theories, and improve practices based on their findings.

Examples of academic journals for addiction, justice, disability, and nursing research.

What is an Academic Journal?

Scholarly research is published in articles inside academic journals, which provide a forum for new discoveries, analysis, and debate.

An academic journal (also called peer-reviewed, scientific, or scholarly journals) is published 1-6 times a year (similar to a magazine) to share original research and commentary in a specific subject area.

Most (but not all!) articles inside of academic journals are peer-reviewed. This means other scholars have evaluated the article before it is published, to ensure only reliable, high-quality research is published in the journal.

What are Research Methods?

A research method is a technique used to discover new knowledge. Research methods can be defined as a group of methodologies or formalized instructions on how to conduct research... [They] are designed so that scientists can identify patterns and relationships, test and redefine theories, make predictions, interpret culturally or historically significant events, explore diversity, give voice, and advance new theories. (“Research methods,” 2001, para. 1)
In general, research methods can be divided into three categories:

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description &amp; Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| 1) Scientific or Quantitative     | The aim is to translate phenomenon into measurable (numerical) forms in order to perform statistical analysis and draw broad (generalizable) conclusions:  
  - Uses advanced statistics (e.g. regression analysis)  
  - Often tests a hypothesis with deductive (top-down) reasoning  
  - Attempts to prove or disprove a cause-effect relationship | Randomized controlled trials  
  - Cohort studies  
  - Longitudinal surveys  
  - Questionnaires |
| 2) Theoretical/Conceptual or Qualitative | The aim is to record and/or interpret in order to identify patterns and uncover the meanings behind human behaviours, beliefs, and experiences:  
  - Focuses on meanings, definitions, symbols, and characteristics of things  
  - Often presents arguments with inductive (bottom-up) reasoning  
  - Attempts to provide in-depth analysis and insight into a topic | Case study  
  - Historical research  
  - Literary analysis  
  - Interviews  
  - Ethnography |
| 3) Pragmatic or Mixed-Methods      | The aim is to choose the most appropriate method for the research question, so combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches if necessary. | Survey with follow-up interviews |

Key Types of Research Articles in the Health & Social Sciences

- **Systematic Review**: A systematic review is a summary of the research literature using explicit methods. The author(s) search, critically appraise, and synthesize results of multiple studies on a specific topic.

- **Literature Review**: This method summarizes, analyzes and/or discusses research that has been previously published, rather than reporting new original research. It features a substantial list of references that a reader may wish to consult when learning about or researching a topic.

- **Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs)**: In this method, two or more groups are formed in order to study the effectiveness and potential risks of an intervention or treatment. At least one group is treated (the experimental group) and at least one group is not (the control group). Participants are randomly assigned to reduce potential bias. This method is regarded as the most reliable type in the health and medical sciences.

- **Cohort Study**: Similar to an RCT, a cohort study observes two groups (cohorts)—one that received a treatment or intervention and one that did not—in order to evaluate the outcomes. However, unlike an RCT, researchers do not randomly assign or otherwise manipulate the groups in any way because the purpose is observation, rather than experimentation.

- **Case-Control Study**: This method attempts to find the relation between an exposure and an outcome. Participants with the outcome (cases) are observed and compared to participants without the outcome (controls). The purpose is to identify what agent the cases were exposed to that resulted in a different outcome for the controls.

- **Longitudinal Study**: This method involves making observations of the same group of participants at sequential time intervals in order to measure progress and observe changes over time.
How to Cite Articles in Academic Journals in APA Style

Scholarly research and other articles (such as editorials and book reviews) are published inside academic journals, similar to how newspapers and magazines have various types of articles.

A reference list citation for academic journal articles must include:

- author(s)
- date of publication
- title of the article
- title of the academic journal
- volume number
- issue number
- digital object identifier (doi) or the web address (URL) of the academic journal

Below is the basic format for a reference list citation:

Author Last Name, First Initial., & Author Last Name, First Initial. (Publication Year). Title of the article in sentence case: Capitalize first word of subtitle. Title of Academic Journal in Mixed Case & Italics, Volume Number in Italics (Issue Number in Brackets), first page-last page. doi: 10.xx/yyyy

Guidelines for reference list citations vary depending on 2 things: (1) if there is a doi; and (2) number of authors:

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<tr>
<th>APA Rules</th>
<th>Example of Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ List last names and first name initials of all authors</td>
<td>✓ Include doi at end of citation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1-6 authors, no doi:

- List last names and first name initials of all authors
- Include journal’s official website


### 7 or more authors, with doi:

- List last names and first name initials of first 6 authors with ellipsis (...) then the last author
- Include doi at end of citation
- If there is no doi, include journal’s official website


### Frequently Asked Questions

**What are volume and issue numbers? Where do I find them?**

An academic journal is published 1-6 times a year. Each year has a **volume number** and for every time it is published in that year there is an **issue number**. They are found on the detailed record in the library catalogue/databases and may also appear on the article.

**How do I cite in-text (when I quote or paraphrase from the article in my assignment)?**

APA style uses the author-date method with brackets ( ) that incorporate 3 parts: (1) author(s) last name; (2) date of publication; and (3) page numbers. The first part, author last name, varies depending on the number of authors:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1-2 authors</th>
<th>Cite the <strong>last name</strong> of the author(s) in brackets or signal phrase for every in-text citation.</th>
<th>According to Brown and Smith, “…” (2015, p. 2) (Brown &amp; Smith, 2015, p. 2).</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>3-5 authors</td>
<td>List <strong>last names of all authors</strong> in signal phrase or brackets for the <strong>first in-text citation</strong>. If you cite it again, <strong>use the first author's last name with &quot;et al.&quot;</strong></td>
<td>Labbo, Place, and Soares (2010) concluded that “…” (p. 17). (Labbo et al., 2010, p. 17).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or more authors</td>
<td>For all in-text citations, use the first author's name followed by et al. in the signal phrase or in brackets.</td>
<td>Cote et al. (2013) found “…” (p. 12). (Cote et al., 2013, p. 12).</td>
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**What is a digital object identifier (doi)? What if there is no doi?**

A doi is a combination of letters and numbers assigned to an online publication. It begins with “http://dx.doi.org/” or “10.” If there is no doi, substitute the URL of the journal’s official website with “Retrieved from”, for example: Retrieved from http://www.cjcmh.com/journal/cjcmh

### References

