Finding Empirical Research Articles in Psychology

What is an empirical research article?

The Reference Databases available at the USF Library give citations, abstracts, and sometimes full text to a wide variety of sources: popular magazines, trade journals, academic journals, newspapers, etc.

Often people look for a specific type of article: **an empirical research article.** Empirical studies use data derived from actual observation or experiment. These studies may have used quantitative or qualitative research methods. Quantitative methodology collects numerical data and uses statistical analysis to reach conclusions. Qualitative methodology uses different methods of collecting data, such as interviews and focus groups, observation, and reflection, and does not involve statistical analysis. Many studies use a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Original research papers that describe empirical studies and their results are published in academic journals. Many academic journals are peer-reviewed. Peer-reviewed journals have a peer-review board (panel of experts from the field) that selects and approves articles for publication. Peer reviewed journals often contain empirical research articles.

To determine if an article is an empirical research article, use these guidelines:

- **What is the name of the journal?**
  Popular magazines like *Newsweek* or *Life Magazine* don’t publish empirical research articles; publications like the *Journal of Educational Research* or the *Journal of Educational Psychology* do.

- **How long is the article?**
  An empirical research article is usually substantial, not 1 or 2 pages.

- **Does the article contain references to other works?**
  Serious researchers always cite their sources.

- **Does the abstract of the article contain variations of the words study, measure, subjects, data, survey, or statistical to describe the empirical research?**

How can I find empirical research articles?

Databases have a broader definition of “research” than strictly empirical studies. Some databases are better than others for finding empirical research articles. Each has techniques that let you search for empirical research articles more effectively.
**PsycINFO**  
PsycINFO focuses on psychological research, including applied psychology.

- You can limit your results to **Peer Reviewed**.
- You can limit your results to **Empirical Study** under Methodology.

**ProQuest**  
ProQuest includes several different subject databases. It includes articles from popular business magazines, trade publications, and scholarly academic journals.

- Limit your search to **Peer-Reviewed and Scholarly Journals** on the main search screen.

**Fusion**  
Fusion covers a wide range of topics in the humanities, social sciences, business, and general sciences.

- Limit your search to **Scholarly (peer-reviewed) Journals**.