

Understanding and Finding the Research Literature

Literature Review
Reading the Journal Article

Conducting a Literature Review

- Importance
- Difficulties
- Sources
- Process

Importance of Literature Review

- Avoid replication
- Build upon previous research
- Standards
 - **Methods**
 - **Accepted operational definitions**

Difficulties

- Vast
 - Specialized knowledge
- Vocabulary
 - Specialized
 - Differs by domain
 - Can affect success of keyword search



Sources of Information

- Popular Press
 - Books, magazines, newspapers
 - Good source for ideas
- Scientific literature
 - Specialized books, journals, newsletters
 - Good source for factual, empirical information

Popular Press

- Written by professional authors
 - Did not conduct the research
 - Reviewed by editor
- Advantages
 - Easy to understand and acquire
- Disadvantages
 - Frequently unscientific
 - Written for a more general audience

Scientific Literature

- Written by scientists
 - Conducted the research
- Fully documented list of sources
- Advantages
 - Trustworthy
 - Peer review
 - Empirical
- Disadvantages
 - Difficult to understand/interpret
 - Specific

Journal articles

- Primary venue of scientific articles
- Standard format
 - **Background**
 - **Methods**
 - **Results**
 - **Conclusions**
- Full list of references

Computerized Databases

- Compilation of the scholarly articles within a discipline
 - PsycInfo/PsycLIT/PsycArticles
 - Psychology
 - ERIC
 - Educational resources
 - Reports, conference papers, teaching guides, books, journal articles
 - ABI/Inform
 - Business, personnel management, finance, consumer information, advertising

PsycInfo Contents

- Journal articles
- Doctoral dissertations
- Technical reports
- Books
- Book chapters

Using Reference Materials

- Read the article
 - **Ensures information is correct**
 - **Determine whether you agree with author's conclusions**
- Use references in article
 - **Points to other relevant work**
 - **Identification of key studies**

Reading a Journal Article

Journal Articles

- Common format for writing about studies
 - APA style
- Understanding format
 - Aid comprehension
 - Extract important information
- Divided into six sections
 - Contain specific types of information

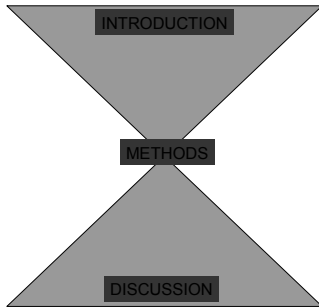
Journal Article Sections

1. Abstract
2. Introduction
3. Methods
4. Results
5. Discussion
6. References

Abstract

- Overview of the research conducted
 - Summarizes all sections of the paper
 - Provides framework for understanding the article
- Read to determine relevance of article
 - If relevant, still need to read paper

Main Body of Text



Introduction

- Explains why topic is important and rationale for conducting study
- Starts broad and ends specific
 - Introduce topic
 - Discuss related theories and past research
 - Identify knowledge gaps
 - Introduce experiments and paradigm
 - Predictions/hypotheses/research questions

Methods

- Explains how research was conducted
- Divided into subsections
 - Subsection describes one aspect of experiment
 - Participants
 - Procedure
 - Stimuli
- Allows replication

Methods: Participants

- Describes important characteristics of research participants
 - Number of participants in each condition
 - Important characteristics
 - Age (in development studies)
 - Socioeconomic status
 - How recruited
 - Subject pool
 - Newspaper ads

Methods: Stimuli

- Describes the stimuli used in the study
 - Differences between conditions
 - Methods by which stimuli were constructed
 - Feature listing
 - Rating

Methods: Procedure

- Step-by step explanation of paradigm
 - Moment experiment begins to the moment it ends
- Focus on how data was collected
 - Email messages, response times, ratings
- Control of extraneous variables

Results

- Report statistical analysis on data
 - "A within subjects t test revealed significant differences ($t(10) = 3.14, p < .05$) between conditions
- Manipulation of data for analysis
 - Combining data
 - Transformations
- Parameters for determining significance
 - $p < .10$

Discussion

- Interpret the results
- Starts specific and grows broader
 - Whether or not results confirm predictions
 - Implications for confirmation
 - Explanation for lack of confirmation
 - Improving research
 - Implications and future directions

References

- Contains full citations
- Allows reader to follow up on relevant research
- Specific styles for each type of reference
 - Journal articles
 - Books
 - Conference presentations
 - Internet
