

WRITING A PSYCHOLOGY PAPER

Gathering Sources

- Use only peer-reviewed scholarly journals.
- Write down your references in APA format as soon as you find reputable sources to help save time.
- Be sure to include recently published journals. Journals more than 30 years old should not be included unless you are reviewing classic works of psychology. The field of psychology is quite young, so new findings are quite frequent!

Searching for Journals

- Humber College Libraries uses the Page1+ data base as a place for students to access peer reviewed journals in various fields. If you are unsure of how to use Page1+, contact a librarian for assistance.
- One way to find relevant scholarly journals to your work is by conducting an author search. Use any texts you already have to find the names of key researchers in the particular area you are studying in a data base.
- Key word searches are useful too. Use the index of your text to find suitable key words to plug in a data base.
- If you find yourself stuck, use the reference list of the scholarly journals you have already found; it is a great tool, as it will include only relevant journals.

A Selection of Popular Psychology Journals

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Canadian Psychology</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Journal of Experimental Psychology</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cognitive Science Research Papers</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Neuropsychologia</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Journal of Abnormal Psychology</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Journal of Developmental Psychology</i> | |



Be Critical of the Literature

- What are the limitations of the studies? Never claim that a study lacks limitations!
- Are there problems with validity? Is the source not peer reviewed?
- Are any biases evident?
- It may be helpful to find peer-reviewed critiques of said literature.

Writing a Thesis

- You should do a significant amount of research *before* constructing your thesis.
- Your thesis should be based around clear experimental results
- Never use “I think.” Only empirical evidence should be used to construct your thesis; therefore, there is no room for speculation.

Comparing and Contrasting Research

- How do the sources you use differ?
- Are the findings similar? If not, why? If yes, how are they similar?
- Are similar samples used (gender, age, socioeconomic status, race, culture)
- Are the methods used similar?
- Be wary of comparing correlational research with experimental research.
Correlational research cannot reveal anything causal, whereas experimental research can.

Some Key Words You Might Like to Include In Your Paper

Internal Validity

e.g. The research has weak internal validity because of a confounding variable.

External Validity

e.g. The research is externally valid because it employed random selection.
Therefore, the results may be used to represent individuals beyond the sample used.

Hypothesis

e.g. Harlow’s hypothesis that baby monkeys will cling to a mother who provides food was false.

Experimental Design

e.g. The researchers used a longitudinal experimental design to study the development of language.

Experimental Condition

e.g. The participants were randomly assigned among three different conditions.

