

PSY620: Analyzing and Citing Scholarly Articles

You are often asked to read articles in scholarly journals and apply your critical analysis of them to real-world and hypothetical situations. In this course, you will be required to do this in your discussions, journals, and assignments. These analyses should be reflective of your comprehension of the articles and their suggested findings and implications. To utilize articles in a meaningful way, you must think critically about what the authors claim, suggest, or propose. When applying your analyses, you should begin by writing down the important constructs each article suggests and aligning these constructs to the questions posed.

Prewriting

Begin by reading a given article and by carefully making notes about the various parts of the article and how they contribute to the assignment/discussion/journal.

Title: Consider the title of the journal article or essay. It may help you determine information about the article's audience or the author's intentions. A title can also give clues about the author's attitude toward the subject or set the tone for an article.

Introduction: The introduction of a scholarly article usually reviews some of the literature on the issue, including what others have written about it, and provides insight into a problem. It typically explains why a problem is worth considering and why previous attempts to solve it were inadequate or not attempted. It may briefly introduce methods used to investigate the problem and often ends by stating the main argument (thesis) that will be advanced in the article or the author's primary findings.

Thesis: Understanding the main argument is paramount to your analysis. Distinguish between the *subject* and *argument*. The subject is the topic, such as neuroscience research. The argument is a statement such as "Neuroscience research explains how trauma affects memory." The thesis in a scholarly article is often found in the abstract and in the first few paragraphs.

Methods: Some articles, especially in education, the sciences, technical fields, and social sciences, have a detailed section explaining the research methods used in the study. Articles in the humanities may not even mention methods. You will want to evaluate whether the methods described seem appropriate to answering the research questions posed in the introduction.

Evidence and Results: Once you understand what the article is trying to achieve based on the thesis, and how it has gone about investigating an issue through the methods, turn your attention to the results and critically evaluate them.

In a more scientifically or technically oriented article, findings will be clearly labeled and often presented in tables or graphs which are discussed. As you evaluate the evidence, look for how well it is tied to the thesis and/or research questions. Look for missing details or gaps and consider the quality of the interpretation.

If you are looking at an argument based on logic, make sure you can follow every step and that each subclaim is well supported. Look for unwarranted assumptions or generalizations considering whether or not the writer is appealing to logic or relying too heavily on emotion or reputation.

Now What?

As you answer questions and make assertions based on your beliefs, remember it is important to be able to support these with facts. As you learned in Week One, knowledge is only knowledge if it can be supported as truth. Just because we think it, does not make it truth. Be sure to access the [Ashford Writing Center](#) if you are unsure how to format your in-text citations that support these assertions. Correctly formatting your citations is as important as the citations themselves. Also remember that assertions should often be supported by more than one source or experiment. As you write, go back to your notes and cite each supporting source with your parenthesis following each assertion.