Finding and Recognizing Empirical Articles

What are empirical articles?

Empirical articles report on original research. This research is based on direct observations, studies, or experiences, and can use either quantitative or qualitative research methods. Empirical articles do not simply report on or summarize research done by others.

For a more detailed explanation of what these types of studies may entail, check out this guide.

How do I search for them?

When searching in the library databases, there are a few steps you can take to help to limit your searches to empirical articles.

The first step is to use the Scholarly/Peer-reviewed filter in the database you’re searching.

You may choose the Scholarly/Peer-reviewed selection from the Advanced Search screen:

Or on the left side of the search results screen:
Some databases, like ERIC, have an additional filter you can use to limit your results. On the Advanced Search screen, choose Reports—Research in the Publication Type box to help limit to research articles:

You can also add one or more of the following keywords to your search to help filter out unwanted results:

- Study/studies
- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- Empirical
- Method/Methodology
- Research
- Findings/Results
- Participants
You might want to try a few different combinations to get the best results.

Remember, you can link the terms with OR to tell the database to search for any one of them: (study OR empirical OR methodology)

**How can I tell that I’ve found an empirical article?**

Although the steps listed above will help to weed out a lot of the non-empirical articles, they won’t catch everything, so you’ll need to know how to recognize an empirical article.

You will usually be able to tell if you’ve found an empirical article by reading its abstract. The abstract will mention the original research conducted, talk about the methods for collecting data or observations, the number of participants, and so on.

Empirical articles will generally have a series of sections in the article, like this:

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology
4. Results
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. References

The terminology for some of the sections might differ or be combined, depending on the article, but you can use the list above as a general guideline.

Still have questions? Contact me at [l.homol@northeastern.edu](mailto:l.homol@northeastern.edu) or [schedule an appointment](#).