Finding an Empirical Article in a Specific Psychology Journal

What is an Empirical or Primary Source Article?
In Psychology, “Empirical” or “Primary” scholarly articles report the results of an original research study. The APA classifies an “Empirical Study” as a “study based on facts, systematic observation, or experiment, rather than theory or general philosophical principle.”

Empirical, scholarly articles generally follow a structured format (e.g., Abstract, Introductions, Methods, Results, Discussion, References) and report on original results or data collected during the study.

Method #1: Browse by Journal
Cook Library’s Journal List is the easiest way to electronically browse for articles in the journals listed in your assignment directions. With this technique, you’ll browse through individual volume or issues of a journal as if you were flipping through a magazine.

1) Visit the Cook Library homepage at [http://libraries.towson.edu](http://libraries.towson.edu)
2) Look for the “Journal List” icon
3) Type in the name of a journal. Tip: Omit words like “The” that appear at the beginning of a journal title.

4) The results page shows you the different places the library has access to the journal, and for which date ranges.
   a. Access to a journal online includes the name of the database or publisher and a link. Click on that link to browse through the journal online
   b. Access to a journal in print will say “Bound Journals” and list where to find it in the library

---

5) When you access the journal online, use the navigation links to browse the journal’s volumes and issues (Tip: each journal may look a little different, but look for volumes and issues listed by year, or for links to “Archived” or “Past” volumes).

6) You must evaluate articles to make sure they fit the description of an “empirical” article.

7) Look for the “PDF Full Text,” “Linked Full Text,” or “HTML Full Text” links to read an article. If there is no full text, use the yellow “Find it” button to find the article in another database, in the library, or request through Interlibrary Loan

Method #2: Search Across Journals for a Topic

You can also use a database to search based on a topic, rather than browsing journal issues. But beware – this method requires many steps. These directions show you how to access specific journals in PsycINFO because the database helps you narrow your search to Empirical/Primary Source articles. There may be journals on your list that are not included in PsycINFO; in this case, refer to Method #1.

1) Visit the Cook Library homepage at http://libraries.towson.edu

2) Click on the “Databases” icon near the center of the website

3) In the alphabetical list, select the letter “P.” Choose “PsycINFO” from the list of “P” databases.

4) To find out if a journal is included in PsycINFO, click on “Indexes” in the top menu. In the “Browse an Index” drop down menu, select “Source” and type the name of a journal in the “Browse for:” box.

5) Click “Browse.”

6) Browse for the journal in the resulting list. If the journal is listed, click the check box to the left of the journal title, then click “Add” to add the journal to the PsycINFO search box.

7) Repeat Steps 4 and 5 for any other journals you might want to search.
8) Click the yellow “Search” button near the top of the screen.

9) After you click “Search” your results will show you every article from the journals you selected that are included in PsycINFO. Search for a topic or narrow your results by methodology:
   
   a. **Search for a topic:** Use the second and third search boxes for your topic keywords.
      
      i. It’s useful to break your topic down into different main “concepts” in different search boxes.
      
      ii. For example, if you want to find an article about attachment theory applied to romantic relationships, type words related to “attachment theory” in the second search box and words related to “romantic relationships” in the second search box. Connect the words in each search box with the word “OR,” like shown in the picture below.
      
      iii. Then click “Search.”

   ![Search example](image)

   b. **Narrow to Empirical/Primary Source articles:** Use the “Methodology” limiter in PsycINFO to narrow your results to only Empirical/Primary Source articles. On the left side of your results list, select “Methodology” and click the check box next to “Empirical Study.” Remember to always evaluate articles to decide if they meet the requirements for your assignment.

   ![Methodology limiter](image)

10) Look for the “PDF Full Text” or “HTML Full Text” links to read an article. If no full text is available, use the yellow “Find it” button to find the article in another database, in the library, or request the article via Interlibrary Loan.

Need help?

**Kimberly Miller**  
Liaison to Psychology  
Learning Technologies Librarian  
kimberlymiller@towson.edu  
410-704-6324

**Cook Library Research Help**  
**In-person:** Research Help Desk (3rd floor)  
**Phone:** 410-704-2462  
**Text:** 410-774-1398  
**Online:** Chat or email using the “Ask a Librarian” link on our homepage