

Research Methods: Empirical Research

How to Search for Empirical Research Articles

Empirical Research follows the Scientific Method, which Merriam Webster Dictionary defines as "principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and formulation of a problem, the collection of data through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses."

Articles about these studies that used empirical research are written to **publish the findings of the original research conducted by the author(s)**.

Getting Started

Do not search the Internet!

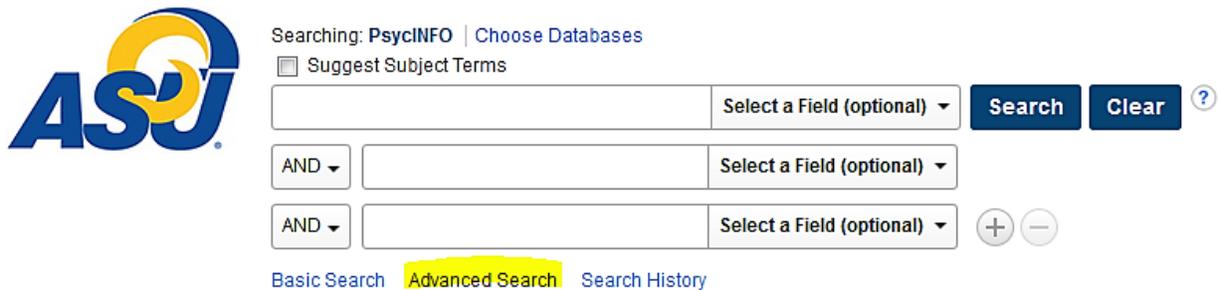
Rather than [U-Search](#), try searching in databases related to your subject.

[Library Databases for Education](#)

Education Source, ERIC, and PsycINFO are good databases to try first.

Advanced Search

Use the **Advanced Search** option with three rows of search boxes (as shown below).



The screenshot shows the ASU library search interface. On the left is the ASU logo. The main area contains a search bar with the text "Searching: PsycINFO | Choose Databases" and a checkbox for "Suggest Subject Terms". Below the search bar are three rows of search boxes, each with a dropdown menu for "Select a Field (optional)". The "Advanced Search" option is highlighted in yellow. At the bottom, there are buttons for "Basic Search", "Advanced Search", and "Search History".

Keywords and Synonyms

Write down your research question/statement and decide which words best describe the information you need. These are your **Keywords or Phrases** for searching.

For Example: I am looking for an **empirical study** about **curriculum design** in **elementary education**.

Enter one keyword or phrase in each of the search boxes but do not include anything about it being an empirical study yet.



Searching: Education Source | [Choose Databases](#)

curriculum design	Select a Field (optional) ▾	Search	Clear	?
AND ▾	elementary education	Select a Field (optional) ▾		
AND ▾		Select a Field (optional) ▾	+	-

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#)

To retrieve a more complete list of results on your subject, **include synonyms** and place the word **or** in between each keyword/phrase and the synonyms.

For Example: **elementary education or primary school or elementary school or third grade**



Searching: Education Source | [Choose Databases](#)

curriculum design or curriculum developme	Select a Field (optional) ▾	Search	Clear	?
AND ▾	elementary education or primary :	Select a Field (optional) ▾		
AND ▾		Select a Field (optional) ▾	+	-

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#) ▶

In the last search box, you may need to include words that focus the search towards empirical research: *study or studies, empirical research, qualitative, quantitative, methodology, Nominal (Ordinal, Interval, Ratio)* or other terms relevant to empirical research.



Searching: U-Search

curriculum design or curriculum developme	Select a Field (optional) ▾	Search	Clear	?
AND ▾	elementary education or primary :	Select a Field (optional) ▾		
AND ▾	measurement scales or nominal c	Select a Field (optional) ▾	+	-

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#) ▶

Using Limiters

Limit to Peer-Reviewed/Scholarly Sources

Depending on the database you are using, you may need to limit your results to only those that appear in peer-reviewed journals.

From the advanced search screen:

AND ▾ measurement scales or nominal c Select a Field (optional) ▾ + -

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#)

Search Options

Search Modes and Expanders

Search modes [?](#)

- Boolean/Phrase
- Find all my search terms
- Find any of my search terms
- SmartText Searching [Hint](#)

Limit your results

Full Text

Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

Published Date

Month ▾ Year: - Month ▾ Year:

From the search results page:



Searchir

curricu

AND ▾

AND ▾

Basic Se

<< **Refine Results**

Current Search ▾

Find all my search terms:
(curriculum design or curriculum development)
AND (elementary ...

Limiters
Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals ✕

Limit To ▾

Full Text

References Available

Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals

1900 Publication Date 2018



[Show More](#)

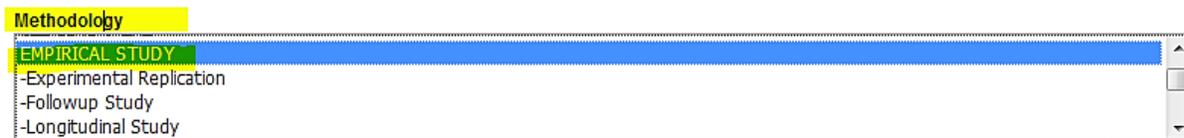
Other Helpful Limiters

In some databases, on the Advanced Search page, you may be able to use these features:

- Look for the **Intended Audience** field and select **Professional & Research** or other similar terms.



- Look for the **Methodology** field and select appropriate terms such as: **Empirical Study**, or **Reports-Research**.



Using these tips should help you locate studies that use empirical research methods. Please go to the next page for tips on how to evaluate articles to see if they are empirical studies.

Tips for Identifying Empirical Research Articles

Empirical Research Articles are about **the original research conducted by the author(s)**. Here are some tips to help you review an article to see if it might be an empirical study.

Where did you search?

- In a library database, that contains scholarly, peer-reviewed sources. (*Easier to validate*)
- On the Internet. (*More difficult to validate*)

Is the article about original research conducted by the author(s)?

*Hint: look in the **abstract** and **introduction** for this information.*

Does the abstract mention any of these?

Many abstracts and introductions contain valuable information to help identify empirical studies.

- A study
- Participants
- Collection of data
- Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, etc.
- Any other methodologies used in empirical research

Does the article include these sections?

Empirical research articles commonly include these sections.

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

Make sure the article is NOT a Literature Review or Meta-Analysis.

Evaluate the article to make sure it is not a Literature Review or Meta-Analysis. Here are good explanations of [Literature Reviews](#), [Empirical Studies](#), and [Meta-Analyses](#) to help identify the different types of articles.