

PSYC 100 Lab Assignment – Using *PsycInfo* to Find Psychology Research Articles

Background Information:

Like scientists in other disciplines, psychologists do studies to test their hypotheses and to expand our knowledge about human and animal behavior. One of the most important ways in which they share the results of their research with other psychologists is by publishing a peer-reviewed article in a professional journal.

These articles are called “peer reviewed” because they cannot be accepted for publication in the journal until they have been examined and approved by several reviewers who are experts on the topic that the author of the article is working on.

At first, journal articles can be difficult for students who have no experience reading them. They are written for an audience of other scientists rather than for non-experts, and they are usually full of technical jargon and advanced statistical methodologies. They are written in a very formal style required by the format used by the journal. In psychology, this format is usually, but not always, “APA Format,” which is the format that has been developed for writing by the *American Psychological Association (APA)*. Journal articles are referred to as *primary sources*, since they are direct communications about research written by the experimenters themselves rather than descriptions of research done by someone else (*a secondary source*).

In PSYC 100, you will not be reading journal articles. However, in this course we want you to know what they are and how to find them, because in later courses these will become an important part of the academic work that you will be doing.

Goal of this Lab Assignment:

The goal of this lab exercise is to give you, the student, experience in locating and citing journal articles in psychology. In every other lab report for the rest of this term, you will be required to find and reference one article relevant to the topic of that week’s lab exercise.

There are many different tools & search engines available to find journal articles and other primary sources; *Google Scholar* is one commonly used tool for finding primary sources in *all* scholarly disciplines, not just in psychology. However, in PSYC 100, you will be using a database devoted exclusively to psychological research: *PsycInfo*.

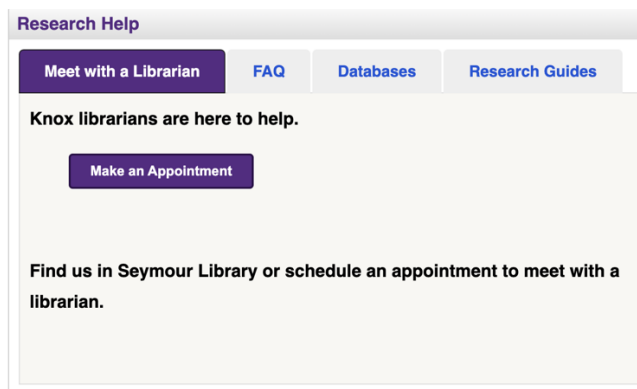
How Do I Locate and Use PsycInfo?

Using PsycInfo is actually pretty easy, although it takes practice and experience to be able to use it in the most effective way.

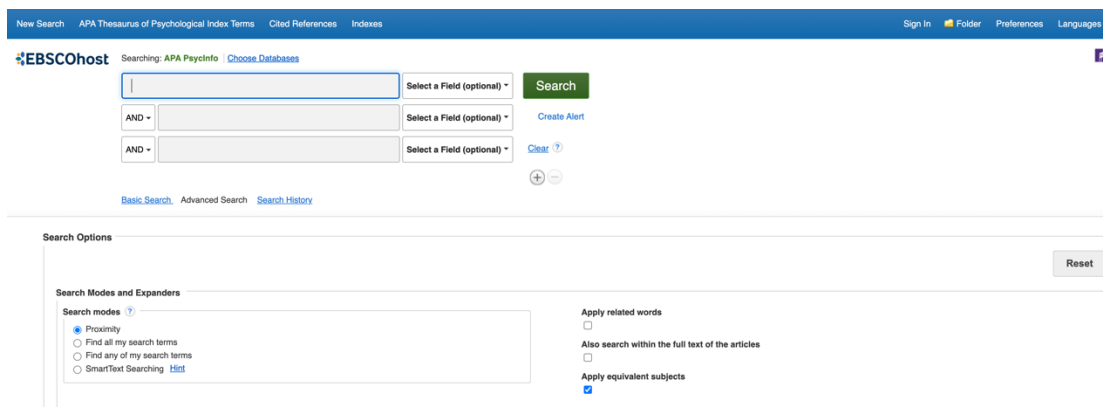
Here are the steps you need to take:

1. Go to Knox.edu/myknox
2. In the list of images under ‘My Apps’, Click on “Library Resources.” This will take you to the gateway page for Library Resources and Services.
3. On the “library resources and services” page, you will see a box with the following headings: “Meet with a Librarian” “FAQ” “Databases” “Research Guides”

Here is a picture of what this looks like:



4. Click on “Databases” and you will be prompted to select a database from the drop-down menu. In this menu, scroll down, click on “PsycInfo,” and then click on “Go.”
5. Clicking on “Go” will take you to a window that looks like this:



6. In the boxes that say ‘select a field (optional)’, you can search for articles based upon their subject matter, their title, an author’s name, and a wide range of other criteria. In this course, you will only be searching for things based upon a topic or an author name.
7. Play around with this for a bit. Type in the names of some topics (for example, “short term memory” or “romantic attraction”). Notice that you can use three different terms at once to capture articles that have BOTH topics (i.e., short term memory AND romantic attraction) or at least ONE of the topics (i.e., short-term memory OR romantic attraction).
8. Each search will present you with a list of articles and books that match the search terms that you entered. When you click on the title of one of these articles, it will show you a lot of information about the article. The most important part will be the “abstract,” which is a brief summary of the book or article that you discovered.
9. In the labs for this class, you will be finding articles and reading the abstracts only; you will not have to download and read the entire journal article – that will happen in psychology classes that you take in the future!
10. Once you feel comfortable using PsycInfo, follow the instructions below and complete this lab assignment.

Successfully Do an Author Search on PsycInfo

Use PsycInfo to find out if there have been any articles published during the last 20 years by someone who has the same name as you do. In the “select a field” window on PsycInfo, select “Author” before typing in your name. If possible, find an article by an author with the same first *and* last name as yours. If you cannot find any articles by a person who shares your last name, find one by someone whose name is very similar to yours.

Provide the complete reference information for this article (Author name, year, title of article, name of journal, volume number, issue number, page numbers, and doi number using the following format:

Knoxstudent, J. M. (2023). Why do students fantasize about killing their psychology professors? *Journal of Aggressive Psychology*, 157 (2), 88-97.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.newideapsych.2016.03.003>

(The long, strange entry at the end of this reference is called the “doi” number. DOI stands for “Digital Object Identifier.” Everything that gets published gets a unique identifying number assigned to it. Some things that were published long before the internet existed may not have a doi number associated with them.)

The format of this reference (APA Format) is prescribed by the most recent edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, and it will be the format that you use to cite references in every paper that you write in a psychology course at Knox College.

After you provide the reference information, summarize what the article is about in one or two sentences. In other words, what did the researchers do, and what did they find? You may get this information directly from the abstract of the article as it appears on the computer screen.

Successfully Search for an Article Based on its Subject Matter or Topic

Use PsycInfo to find an article about a topic that you are interested in. It can be almost anything at all – *Gender differences in aggression; What do people get disgusted by? What motivates athletes to participate in sports? Do dreams mean anything? What is the biggest source of stress for college students?*

Find an article whose title intrigues you and click on it. Provide the reference information for it exactly as you did for the article described above. Once again, summarize the procedure and findings of the article in a couple of sentences.

Writing the Lab Report

As you can tell by now, the lab report for this assignment will not be very long. You will simply provide reference information (in proper APA format!) and a brief summary for each of the two articles that you found.

Like all lab reports for this course, your report must be typed, double-spaced, and handed in as a paper copy to your TA at next week’s lab meeting.