

What to Look for in Research Articles

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Section of Article	Quantitative Studies	Qualitative Studies
Introduction: why the study was conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of the problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is known ○ Gaps in knowledge • Theoretical Framework (nsg studies only) • Key concepts and variables • Hypotheses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of the problem • May include what is already known • Research question • Researcher interest in topic • Researcher experience and perceptions that may need to be bracketed
Methods: How the study was conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design • Description of setting • How sample was selected: how sample size was determined • Instrumentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Description of measures with known reliability and validity information • Procedures • Data Analysis Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative Perspective • Description of setting • How participants were selected • How data was collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interview ○ Observation ○ Focus Groups • Who and how data collected • How to assure trustworthiness of data • How data interpreted • Data Analysis Plan
Results: What was found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive Statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sample characteristics ○ Instruments, the mean, standard deviation, reliability • How was missing data handled? • Results of analysis by each hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes or theory that emerged • Exemplars and or quotes • Credibility, dependability, confirm ability, and transferability of data
Discussion: the so what or what does it all mean?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary and interpretation of findings • Limitations • Comparison with studies similar to this one • Conclusions and implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To practice; to theory ○ To future research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this study link to other research? • Limitations • Conclusions and implications

When you finally find an article to read, critically appraising the article involves considering just 3 questions. Is it reliable, applicable, and valid? Follow the grid below.

Reliable (results reproducible)	Applicable (apply to real world)	Valid (measures correctly)
Was the intervention effective?	Is the identified problem important? Is it important to your clinical setting?	Are the relevant outcomes measured?
Do the measures or instruments have a reliability score?	Is the intervention compared to a standard?	How was the sample selected? Was the size appropriate?
If the study were repeated using a different sample, would the results be approximately the same?	Were the inclusion/exclusion criteria appropriate for the purpose of the study?	Were the intervention and comparison group equivalent at baseline?
	Do benefits outweigh risks?	