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).

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.
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*

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.*
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:

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
**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.