

A brief guide to finding and using different types of research

1. Introduction

There are a number of reasons why you might be looking for research. You might be conducting a literature review in preparation for doing your own research, writing a journal article, or you might be interested in new developments in your particular modality.

Here we will look at some popular types of published research and where they can be found.

2. Journal articles

The most common form of published research is the journal article. Articles may report the results of a study or trial, describe a case study, discuss some issue in psychotherapy or put forward a new idea or technique.

When looking for articles, it is best to use specific data bases such as [PubMed](#) or [PsycNet](#) rather than your usual search engine. Use keywords that capture the key topic you are interested in to search for relevant articles. If you are not finding relevant articles, try different keywords.

Published peer-reviewed articles are considered the highest standard of articles. This is because these articles have been reviewed and approved by experts in the topic. Some databases or search engines allow you to filter by whether an article has been peer-reviewed

Many journal articles are locked behind a paywall; however, some libraries have collections of open-source articles which you can access at no cost. Useful resources include:

- [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) has a variety of journals and articles free to access
- [Google Scholar](#) is a large database with many articles. PDFs of available articles will appear on the righthand side of the search results. You can also click the 'Cite' link below an article to access google generated citations
- [Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences](#) has a guide to finding open access content.

3. Reviews and meta-analyses: aggregated research

In areas where there is a lot of pre-existing research, researchers will produce specific kinds of articles that summarise the current literature or aggregate results from pre-existing experimental research.

A review is usually a summary of the existing literature on a particular topic, often within a particular time frame. For instance, if you were interested in the neuroscience behind a particular therapeutic intervention such as mindfulness, you might find something like [this](#) summarising the current research.

A [systematic review](#) is slightly different, in that it considers a hypothesis instead of summarising the literature. In order to work out whether the hypothesis is supported or not, systematic reviews will sift through the existing research in order to find the most rigorous studies and exclude weaker quality evidence.

A [meta-analysis](#) goes one step further and performs statistical analyses on the data that has been deemed of sufficient quality to give further details about whether the hypothesis has been supported or not. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses are generally used to work out whether a particular intervention, like Eye Movement Desensitisation Therapy, is efficacious. Note that just because a review or meta-analysis fails to find something efficacious does not mean it will not work, it may just be that there is not enough evidence of sufficient rigour at the current time to confirm the hypothesis that the intervention works.

Some databases will let you filter specifically for reviews and meta-analyses – this is a good place to start if you want to get up to speed on a topic quickly. There are also organisations such as [Cochrane](#), which specialise in producing systematic reviews of healthcare research.

4. Practice guidelines

You may have heard the expression “evidence-based practice” or “evidence-based psychotherapy” before – briefly, this means practice that draws on the current research, to make a recommendation about what to do for a particular condition or situation.

In order to make it easier for practitioners to see what the recommended treatment or response is to a condition or situation, certain organisations will publish guidelines or clinical recommendations that draws on reviews and analyses of the current research. Though there are many different types of evidence that can lend support to an interventions, for example, qualitative research, these guidelines tend to favour quantitative research from clinical trials.

The most well-known set of guidelines for mental health are produced by [NICE](#) (National Institute for Healthcare Excellence).

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