

What is a Peer-Reviewed Journal?

Peer-reviewed journals publish articles written by scholars in a specific field that have been carefully reviewed by other experts (the author's **peers**) for their importance, quality and accuracy. They are often called 'scholarly' or 'academic' journals*. Scholarly journal articles are the main way that new Criminology research findings are shared with other researchers, policy makers, etc.

The Peer-Review Process

Many researchers send their manuscripts to these journals but only a few get published. All submissions are first screened by the journal's editor (usually a well-regarded scholar in the field) for suitability and quality; those that make the short-list are then sent to a panel of other scholars (the author's **peers**) for further evaluation.

These **peers** of the author will carefully read the manuscript and recommend whether the journal should publish the article and, if so, whether the article would need to be revised/improved before publication. The peers' and authors' names are kept secret from each other to ensure that the reviewers can be very candid and there are no hard feelings or favouritism. This process is called '**peer-review**'. By the time an article is published in a peer-reviewed journal, it has been through a very thorough filtering process to ensure quality and relevance. It's a form of scholarly quality control.

* Usually the terms **scholarly**, **academic** and **peer-reviewed** are used interchangeably, but there is a difference. A journal might be called 'academic' or 'scholarly' (especially in journal article indexes), but not be peer-reviewed. If your instructor tells you specifically to look for peer-reviewed articles, check the criteria in the chart on page 2.

Also, a peer-reviewed journal may include items such as book reviews which do not go through the same rigorous peer-review.

How can I tell if a journal is peer-reviewed?

The most obvious clue is that peer-reviewed journal articles always include citations. There will usually be a long list of cited references at the end of each article; some legal journals may have footnotes at the bottom of each page instead.

Why so many citations? Scholars are very careful to give credit to other authors whose ideas they've used. Plagiarism – presenting someone else's work as your own -- is a very serious academic offence.

See page 2 for a handy chart comparing scholarly journals with popular and trade magazines.

LIBRARY RESEARCH HELP

Scholarly Publications

Students often ask, "How can I tell if this is a refereed journal?" Although publications might not meet all of the criteria in the categories below, they essentially all fall into one of the four following types of publications.

	Refereed or Scholarly Journal	News/General Interest	Popular Magazine	Sensational Publication
Format	Has serious format	Attractive in appearance	Generally slick/glossy with an attractive format	Cheap newspaper format
Graphics	Graphs and charts to illustrate concepts	Photos, graphics and illustrations used to enhance articles	Photos, illustrations and drawing to enhance image of publication	Contains melodramatic, lurid or "doctored" photos
Sources	Cited sources with footnotes and/or bibliography	Occasionally cite sources, but not as a rule	Rarely cite sources. Original sources may be obscure	Rarely cite sources of information
Authors	Written by scholars or researchers in the field or discipline	Written for an educated, general audience by staff, free-lance or scholarly writers	Written by the staff or free-lance writers for a broad audience	Written by free-lance or staff writers
Language	Uses terminology, jargon, and the language of the discipline. Reader is assumed to have similar background	Uses language appropriate for an educated readership	Uses simple language for minimal educational level. Articles are short, with little depth	Contains language that is simple, easy-to-read and understand. Sensational style is often used
Purpose	To inform, report, or make original research available to the scholarly world	Provide general information to a wide, interested audience	Designed to entertain or persuade, to sell products or services	Arouse curiosity and interest by distorting the truth. Often uses outrageous or startling headlines
Publishers	Generally published by a professional organization	Published by commercial enterprises for profit	Published for profit	Published for profit
Advertising	Contains selective advertising	Carries advertising	Contains extensive advertising	Contains advertising as alluring and startling as the stories
Examples	American Journal of Sociology, Harvard Business Review, Canadian Historical Review	Atlantic Monthly, Newsweek, Fortune, Psychology Today, Scientific American	Better Homes and Gardens, GQ, Glamour, People, Sports Illustrated	Globe, National Enquirer, National Examiner, Star, Sun

Available on the Kwantlen Library website at:

http://www.kwantlen.ca/library/databases/scholarly_publications.html

What are primary sources?

Primary sources enable researchers to get as close as humanly possible to the actual event or phenomenon being researched. They are the documents, reflections or observations left behind by the original observers and participants. The precise definition of a primary source can vary by discipline. Depending on the subject being studied, these could include personal diaries, interview transcripts, original art works, newspaper articles from a particular time period written by participants or observers, and so on. They can also include the results of experiments and surveys.

When instructors ask you to find primary sources in Criminology, they usually mean journal articles or other reports which are the first publication of original research findings, not necessarily the original datasets, interview transcripts, etc. used by the author(s).

Four strategies for finding peer-reviewed, primary sources in Criminology



1. Browse in peer-reviewed Criminology journals
2. Go 'citation mining'
3. Look for specialized bibliographies on your subject
4. Use an article index to locate articles on your topic

Strategy #1: Browse in peer-reviewed Criminology journals

This is a good way to find articles if you don't have a specific topic in mind. Scan the tables of contents (list of articles) at the front of some recent issues to see if any articles appeal to you. Here's a list of some important, peer-reviewed criminology journals available at the Kwantlen Library. There are many more. **All of the titles below are available online** from both on- and off-campus. If there are printed copies available, I've listed their location.

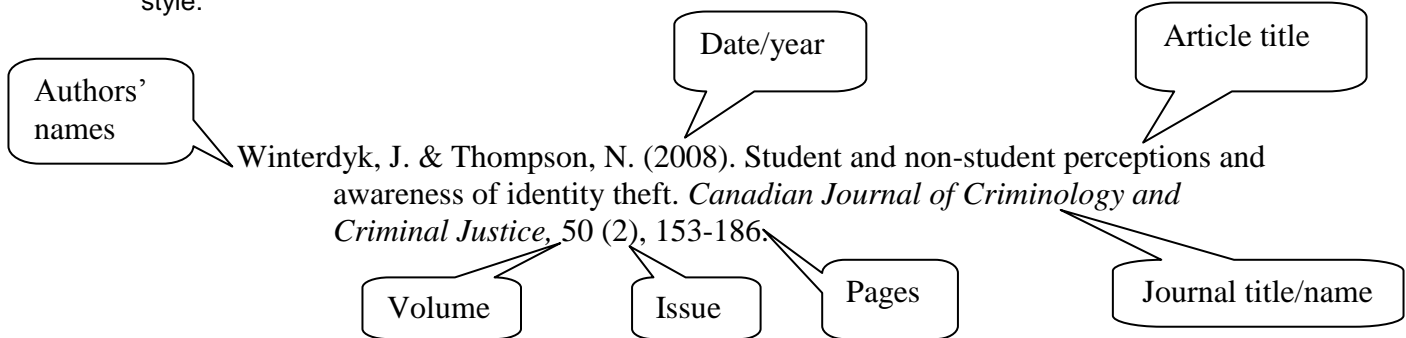
<i>British Journal of Criminology</i>	Surrey
<i>Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice</i>	Surrey, Richmond + Langley
<i>Crime and Delinquency</i>	Richmond
<i>Criminal Justice & Behavior</i>	Richmond
<i>Criminology</i>	Surrey + Richmond
<i>Criminology & Criminal Justice</i> (formerly <i>Criminal Justice</i>)	no print copies
<i>Journal of Criminal Justice</i>	Langley
<i>Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology</i>	Surrey
<i>Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency</i>	no print copies
<i>Justice Quarterly</i>	Surrey
<i>Social Justice</i>	Richmond
<i>Theoretical Criminology</i>	no print copies

Note: Browsing is not a good strategy if you want an article on a specific topic such as:
"Does an injection drug site reduce crime in its neighbourhood?"

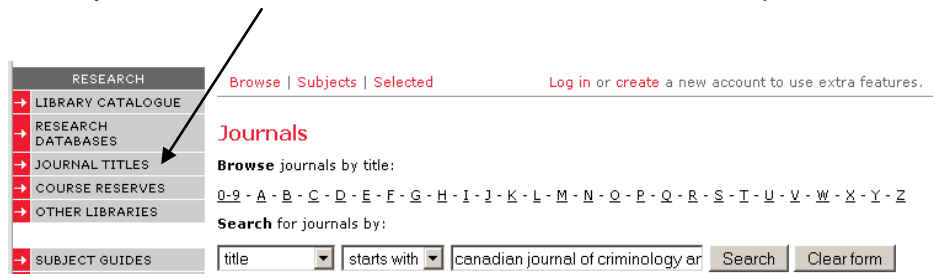
Strategy # 2: Go 'citation mining'

If you've read about an interesting study in a textbook, an encyclopedia or another secondary source, look in that source's list of references (it may be called a bibliography) for a citation to the original study, i.e. the primary research.

A citation gives you the information you need to get your hands on the article. There are many citation styles, so the details may vary a bit, but be sure to note the author's name(s), article title, journal title, date (year), volume & issue number, plus page numbers. Here is an example in APA style:



Once you know exactly which journal you're looking for, you can search for that journal title in the Kwantlen Library's list of [Journal Titles](#) to see if we have the exact issue you need.



Strategy # 3: Look for specialized bibliographies on your subject

Someone else may have made a list of important articles, books, etc. on your topic already. It will probably include some peer-reviewed, primary sources. Don't re-invent the wheel! This type of list is called a bibliography or 'literature review'. Some bibliographies have annotations (brief critical summaries) of each document – bonus! There are several ways to find bibliographies:

- In the library catalogue:

Some bibliographies are published as books and are listed in the library catalogue; to find them, add the subject keyword '**bibliography**' to your search.

- Online:

I've listed a few collections of bibliographies (with links) on the Library's **Criminology Subject Guide** <http://www.kwantlen.ca/library/subjects/crim.html> .

- In an article index:

Look for a 'literature review' article on your topic. These identify and compare important studies and summarize the 'state of the field.'

Strategy # 4: Use an article index to locate articles on your topic

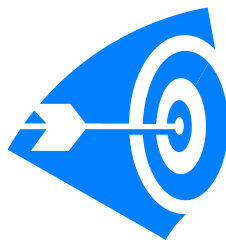
An index (or database) lists articles from many different journals. Each database covers different journals, though they sometimes overlap. Some indexes focus on Criminology journals and are great places to start. The major ones are:

Criminal Justice Abstracts (CJA)
Criminal Justice Periodicals Index (CJPI)
Sage Premier Collection (includes set of Criminology journals)

Depending on your topic, you might want to search in other databases too. For example, if you want to write about the relationship between childhood abuse and juvenile delinquency, you might also want to look at the *PsycINFO* database since it covers journals on child development that may not be included in the criminology databases. You'll find more index suggestions on the Library's subject guide for Criminology <http://www.kwantlen.ca/library/subjects/crim.html>.

Each article listed in an index will have a citation, an abstract (usually), some subject terms, and (sometimes) a direct link to the full article. You can locate articles on your topic using keywords as well as 'subject terms'.

Tips for Finding Primary Sources in Criminology Article Indexes



An article will rarely call itself a primary or original source. Those words probably won't be anywhere in an article's title or abstract so you won't find much if you use them as search keywords in an article index. Unfortunately, very few article indexes have the ability to limit your search to just primary sources. So, you have to think creatively.

Here are some general tips to help you pinpoint original research articles, along with some search tips for specific Criminology indexes.

1. Use the Advanced Search screen

Go to the advanced search screen for every database, if you aren't taken there automatically. You'll be able to build a much more precise search this way. Most of the following options are only available from the advanced search screen.

2. Restrict your search to scholarly/peer-reviewed articles

Many article databases give you the option to restrict your search to only scholarly sources with a check box saying 'academic', 'scholarly' or 'peer-reviewed'. This is a handy feature but it's not completely reliable; double-check if an article has the 'peer-reviewed' characteristics listed on page 1 before you use it.

3. Check to see if you can limit your search by research methodology

Many indexes will describe the 'research methodology' used by the authors. In other words, how the research was done. You can add some typical methodological terms to your search to find such articles. See page 6 for some specific suggestions.

Here are some tips for identifying original research in several Criminology databases based on searching for terms that describe the author's research methodology.

Criminal Justice Abstracts (CJA)

- Usually adds a subject term (CJA calls them 'descriptors') for the research methodology to each article's description. Try using these words as descriptors:
 - o *qualitative methods*
 - o *quantitative methods*
 - o *interviews*
 - o *models*
 - o *surveys*

Criminal Justice Periodical Index (CJPI)

- Like CJA, this index usually adds a subject term to describe the research methodology, but they're not all the same. Here are some examples:
 - o *action research*
 - o *qualitative research*
 - o *mathematical models*

Sage Premier Collection

- This includes 20 journals published by Sage, the same company that publishes CJA. It doesn't always use subject terms (descriptors). You're better off searching for methodology keywords that might appear in an article's abstract. See the examples listed for CJPI and CJA for ideas. Here are some other keywords you can try:
 - o *study OR studies*
 - o *experiment*
 - o *data*
 - o *sample*
 - o *methods OR methodology*
 - o *survey*
 - o *regression*
 - o *analysis*
 - o *statistics OR statistical*

PsycINFO

Scroll down the Advanced Search screen to the box labeled 'Publication Type' and select 'Peer Reviewed Journal'.

Scroll a bit further to a box labeled 'Methodology' if you want to narrow your search to 'Empirical Study' or 'Field Study' or 'Mathematical Model'. You can get even more specific.

Do not choose 'Meta-Analysis' or 'Literature Review' methodologies unless you want articles that describe and critique other works (see Strategy 3c). These will be secondary, not primary sources.

