

# How to access and assess free research



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## What's the idea?

A lot of research is hard to find, sits behind paywalls and can be expensive to access. There are, however, a number of cheap and easy ways to access research evidence.

## What does it mean?

Useful sources are listed below:

- » Google Scholar provides a simple way to search for articles and often provides links to free versions
- » Google Books is handy to preview the content of research books. Quite a lot of the book is often also digitally available
- » Academia.edu and ResearchGate.net are both social sites for academics, but they often upload versions of their papers and chapters. Even if they have not uploaded their paper yet, you can contact them through these sites to ask for a copy

- » Check journals for open access papers and look for offers, such as '50 free copies' when papers are released

- » Email the author who may send you a version of their paper or chapter

- » Subscribe to RSS feeds or email alerts from particular academic journals. You will get an alert when these journals publish a new article, making it easier to keep abreast of the latest updates

- » Consider signing your school up to some journals so that all staff can get access

- » If you are a postgraduate student, you will have access to university libraries and their databases. Once you have completed your study, you may also be able to maintain library access in an honorary or adjunct role

- » Consider partnerships with universities to work with academics who can support you in accessing relevant evidence.

## What are the implications for teachers?

Wallace and Wray (2016) provide some helpful tips of what to consider when reading evidence:

- » Strategy. Identify a long list of research that looks important, then select a few key texts that you think will best help you

- » Quality. Research writing goes through differing amounts of revision before it is published. Look out for whether the author sent the draft paper to others to review and prioritise reading papers that have been peer-reviewed

- » Remember, search engines often prioritise results on a commercial, not knowledge, basis

- » The more you read, the better you will get at making the most of research evidence.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Kara H (2016) Ten Ways To Get Hold Of Academic Literature. Available at: [helenkara.com/2016/01/06/ten-ways-to-get-hold-of-academic-literature/](http://helenkara.com/2016/01/06/ten-ways-to-get-hold-of-academic-literature/) (accessed 14 February 2019).
- » Gough D, Oliver S and Thomas J (2017) *An Introduction to Systematic Reviews* (2nd ed). London: SAGE.
- » Wallace M and Wray A (2016) *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates* (3rd ed). London: SAGE.