

# Article Critique

## Tips for success

### What is a research article critique?

A critical review of a primary research article discussing its **strengths** and **weaknesses** according to a criteria checklist (e.g., STROBE and CONSORT for public health and epidemiological research).

The article is normally written by the investigators/researchers who conducted the original research study. The study could use a quantitative, qualitative or a mixed methods approach.

You are required to **analyse** and **evaluate** the article before you draw conclusions about its **value** in the wider scientific community that includes other researchers, academics and practitioners, amongst others.

### How to structure a critique?

The example below uses the STROBE (**ST**rengthening the **R**eporting of **OB**servational studies in **E**pidemiology) criteria checklist to structure a critique. However, you may address some of the questions when critiquing research studies in other discipline areas (e.g., Psychology, Management, Education).

The critique has two parts:

1. A **summary** of the research article (one or two paragraphs).
2. A **critique** using STROBE (forms the main body; multiple paragraphs).

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Section	Questions to consider
Summary/Description of Article	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the main problem discussed in the research study?</li> <li>• What key background information was provided around the problem?</li> <li>• What were the aims of the research study?</li> <li>• In what way was it original research?</li> <li>• How was the research done? (study design and methods)</li> <li>• Who were involved? (subjects/participants/sample)</li> <li>• What were the main findings and conclusions?</li> </ul>
<b>Sections to critique</b>	Questions to consider using the <b>STROBE</b> criteria checklist
Title and Abstract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the title accurately capture the main research problem?</li> <li>• Did the abstract clearly present the following? (a) overall aims of the study (b) problem being investigated (c) design and methods used (d) main findings (e) conclusions and significance of the study</li> <li>• Did the abstract provide all necessary keywords?</li> </ul>
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was background information about the research topic given?</li> <li>• Was the literature reviewed relevant to the study and discussed in detail?</li> <li>• Was the study original or novel in investigating the problem? (i.e., different to previously published research)</li> <li>• Were the aims of the study, hypothesis, research questions clearly stated?</li> <li>• Did they address the gap(s) in the literature reviewed?</li> <li>• Was the significance of the study clearly stated? (i.e., how and why the study was going to be important)</li> </ul>
Study design & Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the study design appropriate and comprehensively presented, considering the aims of the study?</li> <li>• Were the criteria for recruiting participants clearly described, including relevant dates?</li> <li>• Were locations for data collection provided?</li> <li>• Were variables and statistical methods clearly described?</li> <li>• Was any potential bias addressed?</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the sample size arrived at?</li> <li>• Was the sample size big enough to generalize the findings to a wider population?</li> <li>• If questionnaires were used, were they relevant and had they been tested?</li> <li>• If interviews were conducted, were complete details provided?</li> <li>• Was consent sought from all participants?</li> <li>• Was ethical approval sought from relevant authorities?</li> </ul>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was descriptive data relating to participants provided?</li> <li>• Did the graphs and tables capture key data and were they unambiguously presented?</li> <li>• Were statistical analyses used to supplement the findings?</li> <li>• Was missing data reported?</li> <li>• Were reasons provided for non-participation?</li> <li>• Was the significance of findings presented?</li> </ul>
Discussions and conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the main findings clearly stated?</li> <li>• Was there a cautious interpretation of the results in light of the aims of the research and the analyses done?</li> <li>• Were the research questions/hypotheses addressed by providing evidence from the results (data)?</li> <li>• Were comparisons made of the current study with previous studies mentioned in the Introduction?</li> <li>• Was the significance of the study re-stated in addition to potential future research?</li> <li>• Were limitations of the study discussed?</li> <li>• Was the generalisability of the results briefly discussed?</li> </ul>
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the source of funding provided, if applicable?</li> <li>• Was there a conflict of interest statement?</li> </ul>
Your conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the research study</li> <li>• How could this study have been improved for similar studies to be conducted in the future?</li> </ul>

**Adapted from:** UNSW, STROBE Statement

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