

## Tips on finding relevant literature and data

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*Below are some tips, based on my own experience/practices, on how to find literature and data that are relevant to your topic/question of interest.*

There's no magic – when you start doing research and are not familiar with potential databases on a given subject, your best skill is... googling! Well, luckily for you, at Princeton, there is Bobray Bordelon who is knowledgeable about many data sources, so you should feel free to drop him an email! Of course, you can also ask your advisor(s) if they know about related literature and potential data sources for your project. But if none of them know, then below are some tips to find literature/data by yourself.

Given that you don't need data sources for the outline (due on 10/02), I'd recommend focusing on the literature review first (after finding your topic, of course). To find relevant (academic/scholarly) work on your study, the first thing I'd do is check out if there are any published papers that summarize the relevant literature on a given topic. Typically, in economics, those "summary/review papers" can be found in the following journals: [Annual Review of Economics](#) (ARE), [Journal of Economic Literature](#) (JEL), and [Journal of Economic Perspectives](#) (JEP). For example, had you been interested in "labor market policies," you would have found a [summary paper published in 2016 in the ARE](#), which reviews all the relevant literature on that topic (prior to its publication year, obviously). One nice thing about the papers published in those journals is that it's typically not very (or not at all) technical, so even if you haven't taken econometrics yet, you should be able to understand most of their content (as they're basically summarizing what has been done in the literature on a given topic).

If you don't find anything relevant to your topic in these journals, you could try entering some keywords on [Google Scholar](#) or [JStor](#). For example, say, you're interested in knowing the effect of education on earnings, then you could type "econ effect education on earnings." You could choose to restrict your search to a given time period, etc. by using

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the options on the left-hand side. If you enter those keywords on Google Scholar, you'd see a chapter by David Card from the *Handbook of Labor Economics*. Given that it dates back to 1999, you might want to find more recent literature. To do so, given that it got so many citations, click on "Cited by [#]", and then you'll get a list of all the papers that have cited this one. Of course, you'd get lots of work that are not directly related to your topic, but by looking at the title of the papers listed, you can guess which ones may be more relevant. You might also miss some relevant literature depending on the exact keywords you entered... Not much you can do about that apart from trying with different keywords, I guess...

Once you've found a paper that seems relevant to your topic, it'd be worth reading the abstract at least, and if it is indeed closely related to your topic of interest, read through the literature review part of that paper to get a rough sense of what the other closely related papers in that area are. FYI, the literature review part in these non-review/summary papers are typically located towards the end of the introduction (where the author(s) summarize the contribution(s) of their paper with respect to the past literature), or in a separate section right after the intro section. If relevant, it may also be worth going over the data section of that paper to see what data sources they used.

Finally, one good habit to take when you do a literature review is to summarize the most important information in a single document – e.g., an Excel sheet that has the following column titles: authors, year, journal (if applicable), title, main findings, data, empirical strategy, and theoretical model (if applicable). In your case, since most of you guys haven't taken econometrics yet, perhaps no need to fill out the last two columns. Of course, you would want to fill out those columns only for the papers you think would be relevant to your topic/question of interest. This practice should save you quite a lot of time when you have to write up the literature review part of your junior paper (because then no need to re-read papers you had once read several weeks/months ago!).