

# Finding Articles for PD100 Executive Summaries

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## Introduction

This video will help you find and evaluate articles for your Executive Summary assignment.

I'll recommend a strategy for your searches, help you quickly sort through articles to find which ones are most useful, and give you tips for saving some time in article searching.

## Search Strategy

First let's look at your search strategy: what to think about before you search, how to decide where to search, and how to use the Library article search tools.

You'll need to have a good, focused topic so you can easily summarize the main issues in your Executive Summary. If it's too broad, you'll find too many issues to summarize easily. Make sure you're starting out with something narrow and specific enough. For example, instead of searching for intelligence-led policing, think of focusing on one aspect or example of that topic, like the effects on crime reduction.

Before you search, think about your topic and pull out the main concepts to use as search words. If our topic is the effect of intelligence-led policing on crime reduction, the concepts will be intelligence-led, policing, and crime or crime reduction. It's helpful to think of other words people might use to talk about your concepts, like policing or police or law enforcement. The words you use affect the results of your search, so do a few searches using different words and combinations to see which works best.

## Where & How to Look for Articles

Now let's look at the best places to search for your articles.

The Library Catalogue, Primo, is a good place to start since it has scholarly articles on a wide range of topics. You can find the Primo search box in the middle of the library web page, at [library.wlu.ca](http://library.wlu.ca).

Type your search words into the search box. Here I'll type intelligence led policing crime.

The first thing to do when you see your results is to look in the left hand menu, where you'll see options for refining your results.

The most important one is Peer-reviewed. Click on that every time you do a search to make sure you are only looking at scholarly or peer-reviewed articles.

To see the actual article, click on Online resource. A box will pop up--if you scroll down, you'll see a list of places the article is available from. You can pick any of them. They will take you to the article page, where you can locate the article PDF and print or download it. You might be asked to log in before you get there--if so, use the network login that you use to get to your courses in MyLearningSpace.

Sometimes you won't find what you need in Primo. When that happens, you can use one of our subject databases instead. These are specialized in one specific subject area, and have lots more articles in that area than Primo does.

You can find them by clicking on the Services menu in the top navigation bar, then choosing Subject Guides. You'll see a list of subjects to pick from. For this class, your best bet is likely Criminology.

If you pick it, you'll see Criminal Justice Abstracts listed at the top. It's a good choice for many of the topics you'll be studying in this course.

It looks a bit different than Primo does, but works the same. Type your search words into the search boxes. There are multiple boxes on different lines, and it's good to put different concepts on different lines.

In your results, there are the same options to refine your results as in Primo, including an option to limit to scholarly/peer-reviewed articles.

To locate the actual articles here, click on the Get It @ Laurier button. You'll see a list of places the article is available, and can choose any of them to go to the article page with the pdf.

## Evaluating Articles Quickly

All our example searches found lots of articles. How do you go through them all efficiently without having to read them before discovering they aren't useful for you?

The best way to evaluate articles quickly is to use the abstract. Every scholarly article has an abstract, which is a short summary of the content of the article.

You can find these in the Library Catalogue by clicking on Details under an article in your search results. Then you'll see a box pop up with a Description of the article that you can use to see how useful the article is for you.

In Criminal Justice Abstracts, click on the magnifying glass icon next to an article in your search results. A window pops up with the Abstract of the article.

If the article databases don't give you the abstract, you can find it in the article. Scholarly articles always start with the abstract right at the beginning, before they start the actual article.

Articles can be hard to read, so using the abstracts as a tool to help you get a better idea of what the article says and how it relates to your topic can save you a lot of time.

## Strategies for Fixing Search Problems

Finally, let's look at some strategies you can use when you aren't finding things as easily as you'd like.

Often you'll find that your results are not really on the topic you want, or there are too few of them, or there are way too many. There are some strategies that help with all these problems.

Often it comes down to the words you've used in your search. Here's an example: I did a search for problem based policing, and some results looked good but lots didn't.

There are a few things you can do.

The first is to scroll through the results you get and pay close attention to any that look decent. Make sure you take note of the words they use in the title or in the description. People writing about your topic may use different words than you used, and revising your search to use some of those words can give you different results.

The other thing you can do is to look at the Subjects in the left menu. Click on More options to see a list of them. Subjects are words used to describe the main content of each article, and looking at a list of them can also help give you ideas for other search words. You can also click to select one or more subjects on the list to limit your results only to articles with those subjects.

Here, I decide to select Community Policing, which is closer to what I want. Now I only see 47 of my initial results, but all of them should be on community policing.

This is a good way to make your results more relevant to what you want, and narrow the focus of your search.

You can also use your subject words to do a new search. Here I did a new search for community based policing instead of problem based policing, and got a lot more results.

The problem here though is that there are too many--more than 1500. That's a sign that I need to narrow things down to one aspect or example of my search so I can get a clearer set of issues for my Executive Summary.

Again, look through your results carefully. Seeing what people have written about will give you ideas about aspects of the topic you might pick to focus on. For example, when I went through my results one thing that seemed interesting was the topic of citizen involvement in community based policing. When I revised my search to include those terms I got a more manageable set of articles to look through, on a more focused topic.

## **More Help**

Those are some tips for finding articles for your assignment.

If you need help or have questions, you can contact the Library at [library.wlu.ca/help/askus](http://library.wlu.ca/help/askus), or use the chat box on any Library page.