

Expanding Your Search

All that you need is one good paper to help you find more on a topic:

More like this

Not all databases have a “more like this” option but whenever it is available be sure to see where it will take you. Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar all have this option. If you find a good paper in Scopus, hover your mouse over the title and you will see a “Related documents” hyperlink appear. In Web of Science, this feature is called “View Related Records” and you have to click on the title of the paper first. You will see View Related Records under Times Cited and Cited References on the right. In Google Scholar, “Related articles” is found underneath the title and description, right next to “Cited by”.

Who cited the paper?

Move forward in time and track down papers that used your ‘one good paper’ in their reference lists. Authors have different reasons for citing papers but chances are that they are related to your topic. This feature is becoming more common and is available in Scopus, Compendex, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Search for your paper in one of these databases, look out for “cited by” or “times cited” and follow hyperlinks to find out if they are right for you.

What else has the author written?

Author order is a touchy subject in science and technology, but a good rule of thumb is to follow the first author (graduate student or lead researcher) and the last author (supervisor or lead researcher). Author searches are tricky, since many researchers may share the same name, but when you start with a paper of interest you can follow hyperlinks to more works by a given author. This feature is available in most databases so when you search for your paper, click on the author names. If they are not hyperlinked, click on the title of the paper to see if there are hyperlinks to author works in the full record.

What’s in the reference list?

As mentioned above, authors cite papers for different purposes. Maybe they want to show that they have done their reading and recognize important works in the field, or maybe they are building on methods or results that they found in the literature. While you are reading a paper, take note of whenever they reference something that may be useful for you to follow up on, and circle that paper in the reference list as a note to yourself to find it later.