

## Journal Club: Student Leader Guide

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### Assignment

As the leader of journal club, it is your responsibility to your peers in a discussion of the journal club article. To do this effectively, you will need to: become familiar with the details of the article, prepare a brief synopsis of what was done and what was found in the article, and prepare potential discussion questions.

### Example Journal Club Session Outline for Research Articles

1. Summarize the topic of the article.
2. Explain why this topic is important.
3. Describe what the authors were looking to do with this study.
4. Summarize the methods used in this study.
5. Summarize the primary findings of the study.
6. Discuss strengths and weaknesses for the study design.
7. Discuss which conclusions are most supported by the presented information.
8. Discuss questions recommended for group discussion of and reflection on the topic (presented by facilitator; see DIT Journal Club Article Recommendations)

### Recommendations

1. **Keep the overview of the topic and summary of the article very brief.** This should take less than 5 minutes and should focus on what was done, what was found, and why this information is relevant.
2. **Identify the strengths of the article.** It is easy for these discussions to get caught-up focusing exclusively on the weaknesses and limitations of the study. Every study has limitations and weaknesses, however that does not undermine the ability of a research article to make a useful contribution based on its strengths.
3. **Draw your own conclusions by looking at the tables and figures presented in the results section.** The conclusions presented by the authors should not be treated as facts, but rather as augments. It is important for you and your classmates to decide whether the data (in the context of the study's methods) supports the authors' arguments.
4. **Ask yourself if anything is missing that you expected to see.** Review the study's hypothesis/research question and think through how you would design a study and analyze the data to test it. Then as you read the article, try to predict what information is coming next. Doing these two things will highlight any information that the authors left out that you might want/need, and it will give you opportunities to think through the potential reasons behind any difference between what you would have done and what the researchers did.

5. **Review any supplemental materials.** Supplemental materials published with the article can provide answers to key methodological and data analysis questions. Usually these materials are available through the journal's online portal.
6. **Reflect on the conclusions drawn by the authors.** It is often helpful to think through not only how the conclusions drawn by the authors are supported by the evidence, but also how they related to other articles you have read and even your own experiences. Reflecting on what you have learned from an article is another aspect of assessing a research article.
7. **Consider the impact of this information on clinical practice.** How would the information in the article impact current clinical practice standards/recommendations? Think through how the information presented in the article would impact your future practice. Discuss how you would apply everything you have read and the conclusions of the journal club discussion in your future work as a physician.