Google Scholar

Google Scholar is a version of Google's search engine that specializes in scholarly information. So when you use it, your results are going to feature worthwhile documents like articles and books. That's pretty great and all, but you don't want to just jump in and start searching. You have to tweak its settings first, like this. Go into "settings" and then “library links,” and search for *University of West Florida* and check the box next to our name. While you're here, you might also want to go to search results and tell Google Scholar to show links to import citations. That will make it play nice with RefWorks or other bibliographic management software, which I hope you’re using. You also have to be on campus, or logged into the UWF library website, otherwise paywalls might show up and try to charge you like $60 bucks or something per full text article. Information is valuable and all, but as a UWF student, you should never have to pay for an article. Ask a librarian before you give anyone a credit card number-- we'll help you get it for free.

Google Scholar is most useful when you have an article’s citation, or at least its title, and you want to track down the full-text. Check it out. Here's a citation for an article that I found in a list of references. I want to see the full text, so I copy the title and punch it into Google Scholar. I also put quotes at both ends, which tells Google Scholar that I only want results with these exact words, in this exact order. I hit search, glance over the results, and --TADA-- there's the article in all of its full text glory, nestled, incidentally, in a UWF library database. This doesn't always work, but it works often enough that it's where I start when I want to quickly track down a specific article.

Google Scholar has one more really useful feature. The "cited by" link. It's right down here below each search result. Click on it and you get a list of all of the articles Google knows about that have cited this particular article. Why does that matter? Well, research is hard, and sometimes you can only find one or two articles that seem relevant to your topic. Articles in the "cited by" list are probably going to have topics similar to the original article, and might just be relevant to your research.

So that’s Google Scholar. It’s a great tool for locating the full-text of an article you already know about, especially if you have its exact title and for also getting a list of everyone who has cited it. You can also use it for other kinds of research, too, but that’s where it really shines.