Introduction to Finding Measurement Instruments

Measurement is part of the research methodology in all disciplines. Using an existing measurement tool or strategy is preferable for two reasons. First, it strengthens the reliability, validity and potential generalizability of your findings since they can be compared to other studies. Second, creating a new instrument or test takes time, test subjects and expertise that will extend the expense and timeframe for your research.

How can I find a measurement scale, test or questionnaire to use in my research?

Consider whether you need a specific test that has been used before with your population. Do you have flexibility in your choice, as there are many different tests that measure the same constructs such as stress, anxiety, pain and you may want to compare various factors of the test to make a selection.

Test Characteristics to Consider

- Validity
- Reliability
- Previous Use in Relevant Populations
- Readability/Language
- Length/Ease of Use
- Cost

I found a test online, can I use it in my dissertation research?

As a researcher who may potentially publish your findings, you are responsible for ensuring that you have permission to use a test for your research. You will need to contact the author or publisher, identifying yourself and how you plan to use the test. While some tests may be used with permission at no charge, most psychological and educational tests must be purchased directly from the publisher -- in part this is so the publisher can first determine if the purchaser is qualified and competent to administer and interpret the test. If you have questions about permissions and copyright on instruments, contact the NCSU Libraries' Digital Scholarship and Publishing Center: http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/dspc/contact.html

Identifying & Reviewing Existing Tests

A wealth of test instruments exist for subject areas such as

- educational skills,
- personality,
- vocational aptitude,
- psychology (feelings, emotions, mental status),
- and related topics.

For a good general overview on finding tests, see the American Psychological Association's FAQ on "Finding Information about Psychological Tests."

Example

Terms and Conditions click-through agreement required to download the Canine Brief Pain Inventory, University of Pennsylvania

http://tiny.cc/upennvetmed
Finding Test Reviews

I need to know if there is an existing test for a particular issue I want to study.

1. Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print (MMY).

A starting place is the online and print resource Mental Measurements Yearbook with Tests in Print (MMY). Produced by the Buros Institute at the University of Nebraska, this resource provides basic information (date of publication, publisher information, etc.) as well as full-text reviews of many tests. Look for Publication Date, Population, Time to Administer, Cost, Reviews discuss validity, reliability, usefulness. MMY is also available in paper format in the D. H. Hill Library, 3rd floor, BF431 .M435. Most test instruments referenced in MMY will have to be purchased from the publisher.

Example search
- Search for: engineering
- Sort by: Date Descending
- View the record: Career Exploration Inventory
- Look for Publication Date, Population, Time to Administer, Cost, Reviews discuss validity, reliability, usefulness.

2. Test Link: Test Collection of the Educational Testing Service

http://www.ets.org/test_link/find_tests

Another searchable online resource is Test Link: the Test Collection of the Educational Testing Service. This resource offers the publisher and cost information as well as some indication of whether the test has been published in the literature, but does not offer the in-depth reviews. One subset of this collection is the Tests in Microfiche Collection (TIM is 1000+ tests out of over 20,000 in the whole ETS collection). To identify these tests in the Test Link system, use the Advanced search option:

TitleSearch: TIM
TitleSearch: keyword (e.g., self-efficacy)

Availability will show as downloadable (for a fee) on the site, but the entire collection is available in full text through NCSU Libraries in microfiche:
http://www2.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/record/NCSU719231

You will need to request it from Satellite Shelving from the Libraries website. Specify the test you need by including the appropriate set (alphabetical - set A, B, etc.) and call/ID number (i.e. TC012345). For additional guidance, ask a librarian.

3. Journal and Research Literature

Searching the research literature of your discipline or the PsycINFO database and/or the ERIC database. These databases include references to journal articles in psychological measurement and education that touch many disciplines, and an article on your topic might refer you to a particular test. Journal articles may include the actual test instrument being discussed, particularly the article in which the initial creation and validation of the instrument is reported. Other articles in which use of the instrument is reported will likely only reference the test, but that can lead you to the test source or publication. Access these databases and others at www.lib.ncsu.edu/databases

Databases with Test Limit

Use Advanced Search options in the PsycINFO and ERIC databases. In PsycINFO, make use of the TM (Tests & Measures) search field to see what tests were used in the study. In ERIC, use the Tests/Questionnaires search limiter, under Publication Type (most of the results will be ERIC Documents).

Databases without Test Limit

Combine your topic search with a cluster of the following assessment keywords to locate a test on a specific topic (be sure to truncate or use both singular and plural forms):
e.g., in the PubMed database a search strategy might include something like this: osteoarthritis AND dogs AND (assessment OR interview OR inventory OR measur* OR questionnaire OR rating OR scale OR survey OR test OR tool)

Using Subject Headings

Searching databases using subject heading means you will have greater precision because it will retrieve information on a common topic regardless of the different terminology authors may have used. Each database uses slightly different subject headings. See the Table 1 on p.3 of this handout for a list of useful keywords and subject headings in various databases.

4. Book Compilations

Some tests are re-published as compilations in book format. One source to identify such books is the Tests and Measures in the Social Sciences: Tests available in compilation volumes. Select Tests and Measurements Resources in the NCSU Libraries website lists some of the most commonly used resources of this kind:
www.lib.ncsu.edu/guides/tests/testsbib.html

Example:

DH Hill Library, 3rd floor, BF176 .M35 1996

Any similar titles not available at NCSU Libraries may be requested via Tripsaver:
www.lib.ncsu.edu/tripsaver
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATABASE</th>
<th>SCOPE</th>
<th>SUBJECT HEADINGS (select)</th>
<th>LIMITS</th>
<th>KEYWORDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Animal Behavior</td>
<td>Database of animal behavior literature, from neurophysiology to behavioral ecology, from genetics to applied ethology</td>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td>No relevant publication types.</td>
<td>Consider using the following keywords to locate a test on a specific topic (be sure to truncate or use both singular and plural forms). e.g., depression AND (assessment OR interview OR inventory OR measur* OR questionnaire OR rating OR scale OR survey OR test OR tool)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abstracts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arthritis Impact Measurement Scale, Assessment Instrument, Diagnosis Psychosocial, Functional Assessment, Glasgow Coping Scale, Health Status Indicators, McGill Pain Questionnaire, Norbeck Social Support Questionnaire, Pain Measurement, Patient Assessment, Process Assessment (Health Care) Symptom Distress Scale, Ways of Coping Questionnaire.</td>
<td>Publication Type: “Questionnaire/Scale” and/or “Research Instrument”.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINAHL</td>
<td>Database of the literature of nursing &amp; the allied health professions. Some articles include instrument.</td>
<td>Headings: Surveys Uncontrolled terms: Questionnaires</td>
<td>No relevant publication types.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Village</td>
<td>International database of engineering and computer science literature</td>
<td>Educational Assessment, Questionnaires, Surveys, Test Items, Test Reviews… (many more)</td>
<td>No relevant publication types.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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*Chart adapted from “Survey and Test Instruments in the Health Sciences”, the University of Western Australia [http://libguides.library.uwa.edu.au/content.php?pid=34342&sid=253828](http://libguides.library.uwa.edu.au/content.php?pid=34342&sid=253828)*

Test and Measurement Resources Guide: www.lib.ncsu.edu/guides/tests
Resources for Learning More about Tests and Testing

If you are planning to develop your own instrument, search the NCSU Libraries catalog or the literature for resources. The catalog is searchable by author, title, subject and keyword. When conducting subject heading searches, try using some of the following:

- Educational tests and measurements
- Psychological tests
- Psychometrics
- Scaling (Social sciences)
- Examinations -- validity
- Intelligence tests
- Personality tests
- Surveys
- Social surveys
- Instrument name
  - e.g., Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory

Examples:


Expertise Elsewhere on Campus

NC State offers courses on psychometrics and there is also the NCSU Psychometrics Lab pursuing research related to psychological measurement:

http://iopsychology.chass.ncsu.edu/meade/default.htm

Students taking educational psychology courses may examine the test collection at the College of Education Media Center at Poe Hall. This collection contains about 650 full-length tests (in the areas of education and psychology such as intelligence, personality, memory, skill mastery, etc.). Due to publisher restrictions, tests in the Media Center collection are not available for anyone to use to administer, to assess, or to provide feedback to anyone. For additional information about this collection, contact the Media Center:

http://ced.ncsu.edu/medctr/staff.php

At Other Institutions

There are also many helpful university-based websites on instruments.

Examples:

Social-Personality Psychology Questionnaire Instrument Compendium, Dr. Alan Reifman, Texas Tech University
http://www.webpages.ttu.edu/areifman/qic.htm

You may also wish to visit other Triangle Research Libraries Network libraries to use subject-specific test identification databases such as Health and Psychosocial Instruments (1985-present) available at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Heath Sciences Library:

http://www.hsl.unc.edu

Get help from a librarian at www.lib.ncsu.edu/askus
(919) 515-2935
Buddy name: ncsatelilb (AIM, Gmail, Yahoo, or MSN)
In Person at DH Hill, Vet Med, Design, Textiles, Natural Resources