

Trigger question	Clues	Comments
<p>What question did the researchers want to answer, and what question have they actually asked?</p>	<p>To find the question they wanted to answer, look for the aims of the study. These are usually explained in the <i>Introduction</i> section.</p> <p>For the question they have actually asked, they may have used methods that address this question, or a different question (look in the <i>Methods</i> section).</p>	
<p>Have the authors included a suitable range of people to answer their question?</p>	<p>The study participants must be from an appropriate population. For example, if the study is on the effectiveness of therapy in older men, the study participants should be older men.</p>	
<p>Who are the authors? Do they have any conflict of interest?</p>	<p>In some cases, authors may have an interest in the therapy or other product that they are testing. They are obliged to declare this, so look at the <i>Acknowledgments</i> section to check whether they have an interest and whether the study was funded by someone with an interest.</p>	
<p>If there are groups, were people assigned to those groups randomly?</p>	<p>This should be described in the <i>Methods</i> section.</p> <p>If there is a very small number of study participants, random allocation would not be appropriate, but in most larger studies it is necessary to avoid bias.</p>	
<p>Were researchers and participants 'masked'?</p>	<p>If researchers and/or participants were aware of the expected outcomes in each participant (e.g. that visual acuity would improve</p>	

	in group 1 participants), the results may be biased. It is better for both to be 'masked' or 'blinded' to participant group allocation.	
If a therapy is being tested, has a suitable control group been included?	<p>This should be described in the <i>Methods</i> section.</p> <p>A 'control' group is a comparison group. Often, in studies on intervention (therapy) the control group is given a placebo intervention which is indistinguishable from the intervention that is being tested.</p>	
What is the main outcome measure being tested? Is this the best one to answer the study question?	This should be described in the <i>Methods</i> section.	
Have the authors identified and discussed any possible confounding factors?	Discussion of any possible confounders should be found in the <i>Discussion</i> section. The authors should acknowledge any such factors and should realise and discuss their impact. If not, this would suggest they may have not understood that their findings could be explained by confounding factors, and may therefore have mis-interpreted their findings.	
Are the conclusions reasonable?	Conclusions are usually toward the end of the <i>Discussion</i> section. The authors' conclusions should be firmly based on their findings. Check whether the conclusions are consistent with and supported by the findings, or whether they are 'stretched'.	