



**JOURNAL CLUB**  
**Tips for Presenters**

Journal clubs can play a valuable part of your time in grad school. They promote critical thinking skills, dissemination of scientific information, and generate novel research ideas. They allow faculty and students at varying stages of education to interact and discuss topics not otherwise discussed, on a level not otherwise approached. Additionally, the Club provides a forum to practice journal review skills, which are an essential component of the Comprehensive Exams in the spring, and of life as an epidemiologist.

For those new to the idea of presenting in a Journal Club setting, we present a few ideas on how you might find an article to present at Journal Club, and how to make the most of this opportunity overall. Most importantly, we strongly urge presenters to seek out an Epi faculty member to advise you in your selection, review, and presentation of an article.

1. Select an article: This may seem challenging considering how many options are before you! Consider articles on topics of interest to you that will generate conversation. Also consider topics discussed at the Journal Club meetings earlier in the year...variety is a good thing! Finally, you should also be aware of how much information the first year students will have covered in the Epi series by the time of your Journal Club presentation. Articles presenting straightforward methods might be better earlier in the year.

Once you've narrowed down the pool of options to a few articles, you might ask yourself: Was a new association (positive or negative) or novel method presented? Did the results contradict previous knowledge? Did the study make a major public health impact? Were many critical letters written to the editor in response to it?

2. Read the article: Based on what you are currently learning and what you already know, read the article with a critical eye. Consider hypothesis, study design, bias, methods of analyses used, etc. How can readers make sense of the numbers in the tables? Are the results reproducible? Does the discussion accurately interpret results, specifically in the context of existing knowledge? Are limitations and advantages discussed? How did peer reviewers respond? *What would you have done differently?* It's a good idea to keep the Guidelines to Reviewing Journal Articles (Symons/McClellan) on hand while you go through the article. (A pdf copy of these guidelines is available on Epi Journal Club e-reserves.)

3. Present the article: Be prepared to describe what you've read in a few sentences at the start of the Journal Club meeting. Even people that have read the article will appreciate a brief synopsis of the main points before you dive into more in-depth assessments. Give some thought to how you can present the article in a way that makes sense to your discussion

group and draw its attention. Remember: the group has a range of experience from Epi 1 to a lifetime of experience in epidemiology. Will handouts be appropriate? Maybe a few transparencies would help? Will there be something for everyone in the discussion? Finally, it's a good idea to prepare a few focused discussion questions rather than to present your article and wait for people to react to your thoughts. (e.g. Rather than saying, "I think it would have been interesting to see the results of x type of analysis," you might try "I thought these were some of the pros to using x type of analysis. What are some of the cons to x analysis? What method could have been better or just different?")

4. Summarize and process: Finally, did you and the group, learn some information and/or skills from the time spent on reviewing the article? That is, of course, the most important measure of learning: getting the most out of your time and efforts!