

## Identifying Reliable Autism Research

### The Importance of High-Quality Research and Evidence-Informed Interventions

While information about treatments for Autism is abundant, both online and in the media, not all of it is particularly reliable and some information may be inaccurate or disproven. Those caring for Autistic individuals must be able to identify high-quality research to effectively address their needs and ensure they're finding evidence-informed interventions.

### Characteristics of Reliable Autism Research

When gathering information about Autism, the goal should be to find high-quality research with up-to-date findings that speak to the specific concerns of the individual. This means ensuring that the information is coming directly from primary sources (e.g., scientific journals subject to peer-review) instead of relying on social media or other less reputable sources.

Where information is not obtained from primary sources, it's especially important to consider how potential conflicts of interest or bias may influence how information is presented. Additional characteristics of reliable research are listed below to help you assess whether or not the information you find can be trusted.

#### Research is Reliable When...

- ◆ it has a clear and focused research question:  
The research is focused on a specific question that allows for clear and meaningful results.
- ◆ it uses systematic and logical methodology:  
The research applies appropriate methods for data collection, uses a sufficient sample size, and controls for confounding variables.
- ◆ it is free of bias and subjectivity:  
The researchers take steps to remain neutral, avoid personal biases impacting the results, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest.
- ◆ the findings are valid and replicable:  
Results accurately measure what they claim to measure, and can be reproduced by other scientists to confirm their reliability.
- ◆ it avoids ethical violations:  
The rights and well-being of research participants (e.g., right to informed consent, right to data privacy, etc.) are protected.
- ◆ it is subject to peer-review:  
Other experts in the field are given the opportunity to review the research to provide feedback and critiques before publishing.
- ◆ it is impactful and meaningful:  
The research adds to the body of knowledge, addresses real-world problems and/or has practical applications.
- ◆ it comes from a primary source:  
The research comes directly from a peer-reviewed scientific journal, rather than less trustworthy sources like social media or television.

#### Defining Key Terms

- ◆ **Scientific Method:**  
An approach to gaining knowledge in which impartial observation, measurement, and experimentation are used to systematically form and test hypotheses.
- ◆ **Evidence-Informed:**  
Practices that are supported by scientific data and high-quality research.
- ◆ **Peer-Review:**  
The process by which research articles are vetted by other professionals in the field to ensure accuracy prior to publishing.

#### Potential Sources to Learn More About Autism Research

- ◆ [Association for Science in Autism Treatment](#)  
Provides research summaries of Autism treatments to support informed decisions about treatment options.
- ◆ [Autism Research Centre \(ARC\)](#)  
Conducts research on Autism and publishes findings to influence policy decisions that impact Autistic persons.
- ◆ [Autism Research Institute \(ARI\)](#)  
Grants funding to innovative Autism research and hosts webinars where researchers share their findings.

The Organization for Autism Research. (n.d.). *Navigating Research*. <https://researchautism.org/families/navigating-research/#reading-research>  
Singal, D. (2025, April 29). *We need Autism data - and why we need to use it responsibly*. Autism Alliance of Canada. <https://autismalliance.ca/autism-data-editorial/>

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