



Book review: Bedford, D. (2025) *Finding and using information: a guide for nursing, health and social care*. Oxford: Lantern Publishing.

A comprehensive, beginner-friendly guide to navigating health and social care research

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As a learning developer supporting university students on Nursing and Health courses, an accessible textbook on navigating the complexities of the information-collection process is most welcome. Effectively gathering and communicating information in academic assignments is essential, yet it can be a significant challenge for students who are new to these tasks. Students usually come to me for one-to-one tutorials when they are experiencing difficulties with their academic research. They are often overwhelmed by and struggling to make sense of the information they have found. They often feel like they are making little or no progress, meaning that hours of challenging work seemingly disappear into a vacuum. Identifying the information that they need and the most appropriate sources to use is a valuable skill for them to develop. *Finding and using information* promises to help students do just that.

Evidence-based practice is vital across health and social professions. In making the most informed clinical decisions that provide the highest quality of care, practitioners need to find and use the best available evidence. University students in these fields must learn to evaluate the quality of information to undertake this task effectively. As someone working closely with healthcare students, I appreciate the opportunity to take a closer look at a book designed to assist students in developing these essential skills. In *Finding and using information*, Bedford takes the reader on a journey through the processes of accessing

and assessing information to help them convey their findings using appropriate academic conventions.

The book's consistent layout makes it easy to navigate, which should appeal to time-poor students who are used to wading through wordy academic texts. Each chapter starts with a set of learning outcomes and ends with a summary of the chapter's main points. A reading list follows each chapter, containing suggestions of up-to-date publications that students can read to explore the chapter's ideas further. Chapters are broken down into numbered subsections, with short, clear headings helping students to find the part they need. The stylised use of coloured boxes, bullet points, and bold text enhances readability too, with a range of student-friendly activities peppered throughout the book.

The self-assessment checklist at the start of the book can help students to break down the research process, guiding them to identify the aspects they need support with. This checklist could be improved by providing specific page numbers or sections to guide readers to where they can find support for their development areas. Yet, given how easy the book is to navigate, they should be able to quickly find the relevant section on their own.

In breaking down the types of information they might use in their academic work, the first chapter provides a useful starting point for students. It also emphasises the need for students to ensure the purpose of their research is focused and clear from the start, mirroring advice I regularly give to my students. Bedford's source evaluation checklist BREAD (bias, relevance, evidence, author, and date), outlined in Chapter 4, was new to me. I can see it being of value to healthcare students. For one, it is likely to induce fewer sniggers in class than the more well-known CRAAP test (currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose). But, more importantly, BREAD offers a memorable approach to evaluating sources within health and social care, where bias and evidence need to be carefully scrutinised.

Chapter 7 covers the nuts and bolts of citing and referencing, which many students need – especially those new to academic practice. Although the information on ways to signpost citations is helpful, it streamlines the process so much that it may not give students enough to go on. The brief examples are helpful, but my experience suggests students

benefit from having this explained and modelled more comprehensively. In particular, students would have benefited from guidance on the selection of reporting verbs or phrases, based on the extent to which they wish to present information from sources as contested or uncontested. The section entitled 'Tips for referencing and citing effectively' offers a useful checklist, yet students would perhaps need more support in conducting some of these processes. For example, the book recommends that students should 'make good notes', but it does not offer advice on summarising or paraphrasing. In fact, the book does not go into much detail about how students can convey information in a clear, organised, cohesive, and academic way. Students might expect such guidance, given 'using information' is in the book's title.

Bedford gives the important topic of generative AI (GenAI) some coverage, acknowledging its disruptive effect on academic practice and its many ethical issues. The book may, however, have benefitted from greater discussion on the possible implications and applications of GenAI in research and healthcare, given that 70% of students are using GenAI in their academic work (Johnston et al., 2025). The section on GenAI's use in internet searching is already a little out of date. It mentions the piloting of GenAI by search engines. But the use of GenAI has already moved on; GenAI responses now complement the results provided by search engines such as Google. The book's section on misinformation and disinformation was a helpful starting point. It might have benefitted from some discussion of the hallucinatory nature of GenAI-generated content, but this is discussed in the 'Phantom references' section in Chapter 7. GenAI use in searching for and using information is a huge topic. It is discussed at some length in the book's introduction and further consideration could perhaps be considered beyond the book's scope.

Whilst the book mentions research methods, it does not consider them in a great amount of detail. Students would need to look elsewhere if the tools and strategy of research is a focus of their study. In the past, I have recommended Moule's (2020) *Making sense of research in nursing, health and social care* when working with students on selecting and using evidence in their academic work. Moule's book offers a more comprehensive understanding of research design and data analysis than Bedford's. Bedford's clear strengths, however, are in how the book helps students to develop or refine their information management skills and gain an understanding of finding and evaluating

sources. As such, whilst students with little or no academic research experience would benefit from Bedford's reading book, they may wish to move onto Moule's to develop their research skills further.

One difficult aspect of conducting a complex research task is storing information in an easily retrievable way. Bedford offers students sound advice, with his suggestions around folder management being especially useful. Some of these suggestions may seem obvious to the seasoned information gatherer. Nevertheless, they provide a helpful reminder to people like me that we should discuss the organisation of information and notes with students who are conducting research projects for the first time, given they might feel overwhelmed by the process.

Overall, Bedford offers a comprehensive resource that a student at any level can dip into as they navigate the many tasks involved in gathering and using information for academic study. Its concise presentation provides students with accessible strategies for collating and using information effectively. From a learning developer's perspective, *Finding and using information* will be especially helpful when working with students who need support with more advanced literature search techniques. I would certainly recommend it to students involved in complex information gathering projects because it will help them develop timesaving information-literacy skills that are essential, not just at university, but within their professional practice too.

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The author did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

References

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