



Gardening your Google Scholar page

If you have decided to create a Google Scholar page to list your publications and their impact, congratulations. If not you really should. go to <https://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/citations.html#overview> for instructions.

This is an excellent tool for letting others know what you are writing and what kind of impact your research is having. Having this information is really important in education, because our discipline is so poorly served by the Web of Science. It won't be 100% accurate due to the way the engine works but you will see your impact much better than relying on WoS. You can read an early piece on how Google Scholar works in van Aalst, J. (2010). Using Google Scholar to estimate the impact of journal articles in education. *Educational Researcher*, 39(5), 387-400. [doi:10.3102/0013189X10371120](https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X10371120)

Because Google uses robots to decide what goes in your profile you do need to garden the page to ensure that your profile is an accurate record of your contribution. Gardening, as opposed to farming, means detailed attention to removing weeds, pruning things that have grown out of hand, and ensuring your beds look their best.

In my years of using Google Scholar, I've found a few things that you need to look out for.

- Your author name really matters. The APA recommendations are that you use at least 2 initials in every submission, but maybe like me early in your career you didn't do this. Or perhaps the publisher decides to list you without any initials--you can't always control that. How this can go wrong with Google Scholar is obvious--especially, if you have a popular name like Brown, Jones, Smith, Lee, Park, and so



Gavin T. L. Brown

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- One way I find out about these is to have an alert sent to my email account by Google for citations to my research. If Google thinks that a paper on a topic I know nothing about has cited my work that's an indicator Google has put a paper in my profile that isn't mine but from an author with the same initial and surname as me. Another indicator is if Google suggests you add new co-authors, but you've never worked with them. Both of these indicate that the Google machine has added something to your profile that isn't yours.
- In my case, another [Gavin Brown](#) (Leicester University, whom I've never met--Hi Gavin!) who researches geography of sexuality, while I research psychology of assessment, sometimes gets inserted into my profile. And sometimes his co-authors get suggested to me to add. So I have searched and YES, his papers had been inserted into my profile--select & delete! Perhaps this happens to him too? This is important because I don't want people expecting me to know anything about his topic, and they just might if I leave them in my profile.
- I've also seen cases when a person becomes a co-author of a 2nd or 3rd (or later) edition of a well-known text or reference book. Google will automatically add all the references to the earlier editions to their profile. This is disingenuous because they didn't have anything to do with those earlier editions. The honest thing to do is exclude the earlier editions from the citation count and profile. This matters because people will probably think this person is a self-aggrandising cheat if they claim credit for work they really didn't do.

Yes, this is a bit more work, but having a more realistic and verifiable understanding of your impact seems important to me. I expect it matters to people who might want to collaborate with you, hire you, or promote you too.

