

Accessing Online Articles, Journals, and Books: Best Practices

At Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, there are two primary ways to access full-text journals, books, databases, and Galter Library resources from any location.

Northwestern University VPN (preferred)

Use Native VPN for Feinberg School of Medicine affiliates.

Set up VPN for [Windows](#) | [Mac](#)

Galter Library Proxy Server

Click "My Galter" at top-right of the Galter Library home page to log in with your NU NetID. If you see your name there, you're already signed in.

Access to electronic resources also requires the use of Multi-factor authentication (MFA). See our [MFA FAQ](#) for additional instructions. Also, check our [Online Resource Access](#) FAQ for more about who is eligible to access Galter Library resources.

But which option will work best for you? We have some best practices to recommend depending on your situation.

Best Practices for Access

Ideally you could access every journal article or online book with the click of a button, but there's usually some technical or budgetary reason why that can't happen. Here are our recommendations for the smoothest access depending on your preferred workflow.

Option 1: NU VPN: this is really the most reliable option. Log into NU VPN before you start any searching and your connection should mimic an on-campus one. If you are on a publisher site and we subscribe to a journal directly from that publisher, then you should be passed right through to the full-text. However, if we don't subscribe to that journal through that particular publisher (sometimes we subscribe through aggregators like Ebsco or Ovid) then you will probably be denied access on this site. It doesn't mean we don't have access, it just means a direct download from that source isn't available. You can always search for the journal title on our website to see if there's another way to get in.

Option 2: Galter Library website login (proxy) : the next most reliable. Click the Sign In option in the top-right corner of the home page or log in when prompted with your NetID. For example, if you click PubMed on our home page and have not yet logged in with your NetID, then you will be prompted to do so.

Option 3: [Galter Library proxy button/bookmarklet](#): we've done some testing and this appears to still work; however we have had reports of it not working for some users, which is why we don't recommend it as a primary access method. If you are already logged in with your NetID, and you click the bookmarklet in your toolbar while on the website of a journal to which we subscribe, it should either (a) take you to the full-text if you are logged in with your NetID on that particular browser or (b) prompt you to log in with your NetID, then take you to the full-text. If it doesn't take you to the full-text or prompt you to log in with your NetID, then take you through, then we probably don't subscribe to the journal through that website. This isn't necessarily the final word on whether we have it; you should then check/search the library website to see if we get the journal through a different source.

Example Scenarios

I'm searching on Google or UpToDate and come across an article I want to read. I get to the publisher website. What now?

If you are already logged into NU VPN (option 1), which is the best practice, it should take you to the full-text, assuming we get the article through that publisher. If not, see the VPN caveats above.

If you are not logged into VPN and you have the proxy bookmarklet installed, clicking it should prompt you for a NetID login. This is really a combination of options 2 and 3 above. The proxy bookmarklet is prompting you to log into the Galter Library website and then re-routing you back to the publisher website.

I'm in PubMed or another database and come across an article I want to read.

First, we recommend that you bookmark and use the Galter/NU version of PubMed. This is the one linked from our home page and has the following URL: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?otool=norwelib> When you get to the PubMed abstract of an article you want to read, there may be a number of full-text options. One of them will likely be the publisher website. If you're logged into the VPN or use the proxy bookmarklet AND we subscribe through that publisher directly, you will usually get into the full-text. If you don't, try the other link: the purple Find it NM Galter icon. This will take you back to the Galter website and you will be informed if the library has it in full-text and prompted to sign in if we do; if we don't have it in full-text, you'll be given the link to request it through interlibrary loan. If you encounter problems at this point, send us a message so we can investigate your account.

Note: you only see the purple Find it NM Galter icon in PubMed if you started your PubMed session with the URL linked above. If you didn't – e.g. you did a Google search, came across a PubMed abstract and clicked it – then you will be in generic PubMed and will see publisher full-text links only and not NU ones. In that case, we recommend that you open the [PubMed NU version](#) in another browser tab, reload the previous PubMed abstract page, at which point the purple icon should now

show. The publisher full-text links *may* work but they only link to one source which we may not subscribe to; the NU link in PubMed links to all possible sources that we can access.

I have the DOI (digital object identifier) for an article and want to use that to find and access it

While a DOI is a permanent, persistent link to an article on a publisher's website, having this is not a guarantee that you can access that article's full-text. If the journal is freely available or open access, then you should have no problem. If it is something Galter Library subscribes to AND we get it through the publisher site, then entering the DOI will usually give you access, assuming you are already logged in with VPN. *Our recommendation:* Before you do any DOI searching, log into NU VPN first. If you are logged into VPN and still can't access it, see the alternative options listed in the VPN description above.

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