

The IA is the perfect opportunity to put some marks in the bank and make that 6 or 7 in the course much easier to achieve.

The first step in writing a strong commentary in economics is choosing an appropriate article.

Why does this matter?

If you choose a bad article you'll find that it is like competing in the Olympic 100 meter dash wearing your granny's high heels. It doesn't matter how good you are. Your name might be Usain Bolt. You're working with the wrong equipment, so you're going to get beat. Here, just like so much else in life, you've got to make good decisions at the start of the thing to end up where you want to go.

Actually, you need to **decide on the concept** you want to explore **BEFORE** you go looking for your article. You should normally focus on one of the really major concepts like supply and demand, market failure, or the macroeconomic objectives. And once you've done that you'll know what type of article you're looking for.

Tips for finding an article

Here is how to spot the perfect article for your commentary,

- Of course **the article can't be written by an economist**. It relates to course concepts, but doesn't explain or understand the economic reasons behind what's going on. It might say something like, "apples are more expensive than they were before the drought, but no one can figure out why." So you get to come in and be a hero.
- The article **relates to theories that you have covered in class**. If it's about development, but you haven't covered development yet, save that article for a later IA and find something you're sure you can nail.
- The article **can be sufficiently explained using two related theories**. For example it might be explainable using (1) supply and demand, and (2) elasticity. It isn't always necessary that two concepts be involved in your analysis to achieve full marks, but it allows you to show how theories interrelate (and that you know more than one concept).
- Make sure the article is **not from a source that you have covered in a previous IA**. Using several different online sources are fine. But several articles from the same news organization (i.e. all from the BBC, or all from the New York Times) is not okay.
- **The article must be published within the last 12 months**. This isn't 12 months from the start (or the end) of the course, but from the time you write that specific commentary.
- Finally, **the article will be a slam-dunk, perfect example of the concept you want to discuss**. You don't want to have to waste words trying to justify why you think a certain product has negative externalities of consumption. It needs to be obvious. For example, vaccinations obviously have positive externalities of consumption. Wheat, while good for you (because if you don't eat anything you'll die) is a much worse choice. So you'd much rather go with the subsidizing vaccinations article,

Google news is obviously a great source. Once you've chosen your concept you can go a long way doing simple searches like "**cotton subsidy shortage**" or "**vaccination price Africa**". And then test the articles you find against the criteria above. It should take you too long if you know what you need. However, even if it does take you a couple of hours that's time well spent.