

## HOW TO READ AN ACADEMIC ARTICLE

Reading scholarly sources, especially research studies, is challenging. These tips will help you master academic reading.

**Understand the structure:** Academic articles are usually divided into several sections. These include the abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations. Not every article will have all of these sections, and they may be called by other names, but in general this is the structure of academic articles.

**Skim, don't read:** That's right. *Don't* read an academic article from beginning to end. Start by skimming to get a general feel for the article's structure.

**Read sections judiciously:** When you do start reading, begin with the introduction and the conclusion (which may not be called conclusion - look for the last part of the article). These sections give you the overview, context, and summary of the article. They help you determine if the findings of the article are useful for your particular research.

**Now, read:** Once you've skimmed and chosen a few articles to focus on, read them while paying special attention to the arguments, findings, and recommendations. Highlight, annotate, underline, or mark up important ideas.

**Re-read:** There's no way around it—you have to read academic sources more than once. That first read-through gives a sense of the main arguments. Now, re-read for understanding—do you agree with the author's arguments and findings? Can you use them to build on and support your own writing? Are there key quotes that capture what you want to say in your writing? Mark these down and use them to help you get a better understanding of your subject.

**Check out the references:** Mining the references of academic articles is an excellent research strategy for finding related materials that might not turn up in a database search. If you can find one useful article, go to the reference list and read through it—chances are you'll find more sources

# *ROADMAP OF AN ACADEMIC ARTICLE*

## *Title*

Titles of scholarly articles are descriptive and specific.

## *Authors and Credentials*

Authors' credentials will always be listed, as well as where they work (institutional affiliation) and sometimes contact information.

## *Abstract*

All scholarly articles should contain an abstract under the title and authors' name, before the actual article begins. This typically consists of a one-paragraph summary of the article. The purpose of an abstract is to help the reader determine if they want to spend the time and effort reading the entire scholarly article, since scholarly articles tend to be lengthy. The abstract will summarize the article's purpose, significant results, and implications of the study. NOTE: Never quote from the abstract!

## *Introduction*

The first part of the actual article is the introduction in which the authors state the topic of the article and the article's purpose.

## *Literature Review*

This section discusses the literature that has already been written about the topic. The authors will list all the important studies that have already been done pertaining to the topic. In this section, there will be many in-text citations where the authors reference other sources.

## *Methods*

In this section of the article, the research methods used in the study are provided, including enough details so that another researcher would be able to replicate the study. Information on who the participants were, how they were recruited, and what was done are included. The methods section often times includes sub-sections.

## *Results/Findings*

The results section is where the authors provide the results of the study, which typically consists of statistical analysis. Many times, this section includes graphs, tables, or charts. This is the one section of the scholarly article that you can skim over, especially if you don't understand the statistics presented in the study.

## *Discussion & Conclusion*

If you don't understand the statistical analysis discussed in the results section, don't fret! The discussion section of a scholarly article will discuss the statistical analysis in layman's terms. Also in this section will be a discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the study; the study's implications; as well as questions for future research.

## *Appendices*

An appendix gives additional information and typically includes information that is too detailed to include in the body of the paper, such as a scale, test measurement, or raw data. The authors will include this information in an appendix so that the body of the paper can remain focused.

## *Bibliography/Works Cited/References*

The last section of a scholarly article is the bibliography section, in which the authors will list all the sources referenced in the article. The authors will list the most pertinent sources related to the topic, so don't skip over this section! If you don't know how to find the sources listed in the bibliography, ask a librarian!

