



How to Read a Scholarly Journal Article

You will read many scholarly journals (also referred to as ‘academic’ and ‘peer reviewed’) in your college career and beyond. Here are some tips on understanding and making the most of what you find.

Major sections: (Not always labeled and every article may not include all sections!)

- **Abstract** – usually indented or italicized at the beginning of the article, the abstract provides a summary of the research, including its purpose, significant results, and implications. *Read the abstract to quickly gauge if the article suits your paper’s topic.*
- **Introduction** – introduces the topic, the thesis, and tells you why the research is important. *Focus in on the thesis – usually found in the first and last paragraph of the intro.* The introduction is sometimes combined with ‘Literature Review’ below.
- **Literature Review** – describes any previous research or discussion and adds credibility to the author and their research. *This section can help get you up to speed on the topic.*
- **Method or Methodology** – describes the methods used in the research and/or how the author will try to support or (disprove) the thesis.
- **Data** – all the data collected from the research. Look for graphs and tables.
- **Results** – describes the outcome of the research. Again, look for graphs and tables. Sometimes combined with ‘Discussion’ below.
- **Discussion** – the authors’ interpretation of what the results mean to the field and how it addresses the original research question/thesis.
- **Conclusion, Implications or Summary** – details the key issues resulting from the research and makes recommendations for future research, policy or practice in the relevant field.
- **Bibliography** – lists sources used in the article. *Usually quite extensive and helpful to identify other major practitioners in the field as well as additional sources to research.*

Reading strategies: (aka ‘how to think like a scholar’)

Read in this order...	While asking yourself...
Abstract	What is the article about? Is it relevant to your research?
Introduction	What is the main research question?
Results / Discussion	What are the key findings or answers to the research question?
Method	Who are the participants and how was the study conducted?
Conclusion	What are the key conclusions? What might be some implications for future research?
The remaining sections	

The answers are usually found in the first and last few pages of an article. Articles aren’t mysteries – it is okay to read the ending first! And skimming some sections is perfectly okay. If the article is full of discipline-specific jargon, you may need to consult an online dictionary or other resource. (If it is too full of jargon or otherwise incomprehensible, you may decide this isn’t the article for you.)

When in doubt, ask your professor or a librarian.

Scholarly Journal Article Reading Log

Citation	
<i>Introduction</i> Research Question(s)?	
<i>Results / Discussion</i> Key Findings and Answers to the Questions?	
<i>Method</i> Participants / Data Sources?	
<i>Method</i> How Was The Study Conducted?	
What Questions Are You Left With?	

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