

READING A JOURNAL ARTICLE



TIP ONE – Use a dictionary

Find an electronic or print dictionary and keep it handy; consult it often! Discipline-specific dictionaries often provide more information than just a definition. While reading the article, highlight words you'll need to check.

TIP TWO – Use the article's format to your advantage

Scholarly articles are published with conventional sections which include an abstract which summarizes the research, an introduction, the authors' conclusion, and cited references.

Scholarly articles are not meant to be read in page order as you would a book. Rather, approach a journal article by reading the abstract first, followed by its conclusion and discussion. In this way, you'll learn why the research was conducted and the results of the research. You'll learn if the paper reflects your thought on the topic. Refer to this chart for more information on reading article sections.

Typical Order	Recommended Order of Reading
1. Abstract	1. Abstract
2. Introduction/Literature Review	2. Conclusion
3. Method or Methodology	3. Discussion
4. Results	4. Introduction/Literature Reviewed
5. Discussion	5. Method or Methodology
6. Conclusion	6. Results
7. Bibliography/References	7. Bibliography/References

NOTE: In Nursing literature, the **abstract** may be referred to as the **summary**; the **conclusion** referred to as **implications (for practice)**.

TIP THREE – Planning

Plan on reading the article more than once. First, skim the article for a broad overview. Then, go back, and read more carefully, focusing on areas that seem most important.

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TIP FOUR – Be critical

Being critical doesn't mean being negative! Rather, it requires you read in a thoughtful and reflective manner. Make notes as you work your way through the article. Look for answers to questions such as:

1. What is the purpose of this article? (Look for in the **abstract** and **conclusion**)
2. Does the article fit the topic for your literature review, annotated bibliography, or assignment?
3. What questions are the authors asking? What is the hypothesis - (defined as "A theoretical statement that has yet been tested against data collected in a concrete situation, but which it is possible to test for providing clear evidence for support or rejection."*) (Look for in the **introduction**)
4. Does the article's results and conclusion support the hypotheses?
5. Examine the article's **literature reviewed** section and the **reference list** located at the end of the paper. Are there other sources that might be useful?

TIP FIVE – Watch for significant wording

Read carefully looking for implied information. The authors' wording can be subtle; look for words such as "but" and "although" which often begin significant statements.

* Walliman, Nicholas. (2010). Research Methods: the Basics. Taylor & Francis.