

HOW TO READ A JOURNAL ARTICLE

STEPS FOR
RESEARCH SUCCESS



KNOW AND REFINE YOUR TOPIC

1

Choose your topic, but be flexible. As you find and choose articles to read, get specific. The more targeted your topic and guiding research question, the easier to find articles. Can't find articles? You may be too specific. Refine up, or down as you go.

START WITH THE ABSTRACT

2

Read the abstract. Is it relevant to your research, topic or question? Does it fit where you want to go? Does it add a useful dimension? If no, stop and find another article. If yes, keep going.

SCAN THE BIG HEADINGS

3

Pay attention to methods, visuals, graphs, charts, and key points. What relates to your research question? Are you interested in their methods, argument, data, or conclusions? If yes, keep reading.

READ LIT REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

4

A lit review introduces an article and situates in the larger context. The conclusion summarizes and gives next steps. These can help you to refine thinking on your topic and research question.

ROAD MAP: REFERENCES

5

A published article is nested within and references other published articles. These give you a fantastic road map to guide your growing research article search.

ANALYZE AND SYNTHESIZE

6

Can you answer the five Cs? Category (what kind of article); Context (where does it fit); Correctness (is it valid?); Contributions (what did it add?); Clarity (easy to understand?). If so, then you are ready to talk about it with confidence!