

Understanding Primary Research Articles

- When reading primary research articles, you might have varying purposes, depending on your task. Understanding your purpose will allow you to focus on parts of the article that will serve it best.
- It is also important to allow yourself to vary your reading speeds, depending on your purpose and the part of the article that suits your purpose.

Purpose

Preliminary gathering of research for a paper
 Basic understanding of research area

 Looking for additional sources or research
 Annotated Bibliography paper
 Literature Review assignment

 In-depth reading of article for a research paper
 Reading for research methodology course
 Reading for theory course

Reading Focus & Speed

Skim abstract and conclusion
 Find foundational author and read their work or find encyclopedia and look at that area
 Skip straight to Lit Review section or bibliography
 Read quickly to write one paragraph summary
 Read to understand connections between authors & ideas

 Read thoroughly and slowly as is necessary
 Focus on methodology section
 Focus on Literature Review of History section

Once you understand what your focus is and how quickly you should be reading the article, use the chart below to pick out the essentials of any academic article.

Essentials	Look for
Title	Focus of the study, hypothesis, or research question
	Type of article (primary study, position paper, or literature review)
Author & Institution	Is this author the foundational author (being of essential importance, or having done earliest work that is later recognized as having lasting importance)? What institution is this author from? Do they specialize in this arena?
Abstract	Purpose of study
	Source(s) from which the data are drawn (participants or sample)
	Method used for collecting data
	General results
	General interpretations of the results
Introduction	Argument crafted from literature review
	Research question
	Hypothesis
Methodology	Sample
	Research design (treatments, techniques or materials)
	Data-collection procedures (instruments or observational methods)
	Procedures followed
Results	Findings, support or non-support of hypothesis
Discussion/Conclusion	Implications and importance of findings. Further research needed?
Limitations	Is this generalizable?
References	Other research you should read, especially often-cited papers