

Tips for Reading A Research/Scientific Article

Adapted from the Cengage Learning website (www.cengage.com).

Reading research articles can be a challenge. Here are a few suggestions for how to read a research article and understand it.

1. **Read the Abstract.** It consists of a brief summary of the research questions and methods. It may also state the findings. Because it is short and sometimes written in dense, technical language, you may need to read it a couple of times. Try to restate the abstract in your own nontechnical language.
2. **Read the Introduction.** This is the beginning of the article, appearing first after the Abstract. This contains information about the authors' interest in the research, why they chose the topic, their hypothesis, and methods.
3. **Read the Discussion section.** Skip over the Methods and Results sections for the time being. The Discussion section will explain the main findings in great detail and discuss any methodological problems or flaws that the researchers discovered.
4. **Read the Methods section.** Now that you know the results and what the researchers claim the results mean, you are prepared to read about the Methods. This section explains the type of research and the techniques and assessment instruments used. If the research utilized self-reports and questionnaires, the questions and statements used may be set out either in this section or in an appendix that appears at the end of the report.
5. **Read the Results section.** This is the most technically challenging part of a research report. But you already know the findings (from reading about them in the Discussion section). This section explains the statistical analyses that led the authors to their conclusions.
6. **Read the Conclusion.** The last section of the report (before any appendices) summarizes the findings, and, more importantly, it sets out what the researchers think is the value of their research for real-life application. This section often contains suggestions for future research, including issues that the researchers became aware of in the course of the study. Following the conclusion may be appendices, usually tables of findings, presentations of questions and statements used in self-reports and questionnaires, and examples of forms used (such as forms for behavioral assessments).