

Strategies for Reading Journal Articles

Journal articles usually have quite a rigid structure that is determined by the particular journal in which they appear and by the type of research being reported; this makes extracting information from them sometimes easier than less rigid text types. The reporting of empirical research will mostly follow the format of abstract, introduction, methods, results, discussion, and conclusion.

Function	Reading Strategies
<p>Abstracts provide a complete overview of what the research is about, what it did, how it did it, what it found and what those results mean.</p>	<p>Given the function of the abstract, you should read it first to gain a general understanding about the whole paper/research.</p>
<p>Introductions usually provide a brief review of previous research, a rationale or reason for the research and an outline of exactly what it is that the research is aiming to do.</p>	<p>This diagram provides an outline of the sequence of information presented in the introduction. Knowledge about this structure will help you to locate relevant information and develop a clearer picture of what the research is about and why it has been done.</p>
<p>Literature Review sections include a review of previously published material on the topic being researched. A review may also indicate which studies are of key importance.</p>	<p>This section will provide a context against which the present research is being conducted.</p>
<p>Method sections do what their titles suggest: describe the methods used in the research.</p>	
<p>Results sections also do what their titles suggest: describe the results found.</p>	<p>You will sometimes find the results and discussion sections are combined.</p>
<p>Discussion sections provide an interpretation of what the results actually mean in terms of the field and the original research question or hypothesis.</p>	<p>Read the discussion section to understand what the results mean. References to the literature review may also be undertaken; comparing the results of the study to previous research.</p>
<p>Conclusion (and Recommendations) Provides a summary of the key points of the discussion, the outcomes of the study and the meaning and implications of the research. It also details the implications of the research and makes recommendations about further research or policy and practice in the relevant area.</p>	<p>Read the conclusion or general discussion section for an understanding of the key issues resulting from the research.</p>

You can use your knowledge of the structure and function of each section to improve the efficiency of your reading. Knowing where a certain type of information is located will reduce the time it takes to locate this information, as well as the time it takes you to read the article.