



Research Article Reading Framework

A Step-by-Step Guide for Students, Researchers & Professionals

Use this framework to read smarter, take better notes, and evaluate research critically.

PHASE 1 — Quick Skim

Step	Action	Purpose
1	Read the Title	Identify the topic, population, and key variables at a glance.
2	Read the Abstract	Get the full picture in under 2 minutes: the research question, method, results, and conclusion.
3	Scan Section Headings	Understand the article's structure and identify where to navigate if you need detail.
4	Read Discussion & Conclusion	Understand what the authors found and why it matters — before diving deeper into the methods or results.
5	Review Figures & Tables	Visual data communicates findings faster than text. Always read captions alongside the graphics.

Ask yourself: *Is this article relevant to my research question? If yes, proceed to Phase 2.*

PHASE 2 — Structured Read & Section Notes

Section	What to Look For	Notes Prompt
Introduction	Background, context, existing literature, research gaps, and the research question or hypothesis.	Why was this study needed? What gap does it fill?
Methods	Study design, sample characteristics, data collection process, and statistical analysis approach.	How was the study conducted? Is the design appropriate for the question?
Results	Key findings, statistical outcomes, tables, and figures summarizing what the data showed.	What did they find? Look at effect sizes and confidence intervals, not just p-values.
Discussion	Interpretation of results, comparison to prior studies, alternative explanations, and limitations.	What do the results mean? Are the conclusions fully supported by the data?
Conclusion	Overall summary of the study's contribution, implications for practice, and directions for future research.	How does this study advance knowledge? What questions remain unanswered?





PHASE 3 — Critical Evaluation

Evaluation Area	Questions to Ask
Contribution	Does this study add something new to the field? Does it replicate, extend, or challenge existing research?
Evidence Quality	Are the sources current and credible? Is the sample size adequate? Are the methods appropriate for the research question?
Strengths & Weaknesses	What does the study do well? Are there gaps, biases, or methodological limitations acknowledged by the authors?
Agreement / Skepticism	Do you agree with the central claims? Is the evidence convincing? What additional evidence would strengthen the argument?
Relevance to Your Work	How does this study support or challenge your research question? Can you cite this source confidently in your own work?

ARTICLE NOTES SNAPSHOT

Article Title / Authors:	
Research Question:	
Key Finding(s):	
Methodology:	
Relevance to My Work:	
Limitations Noted:	
Citation (APA 7th Edition):	

