How to Read a Scholarly Article

Do scholarly articles confuse you? You’re not alone. Here’s a tip: stop reading academic articles like you would your favorite novel from start to finish, and instead, navigate them strategically, recognizing which parts of the article are most important for your needs. Academic articles generally follow a predictable outline, which you can use to your advantage.

1. Read the Abstract
   The abstract provides an overview of the paper, a synopsis of the main research question, and a summary of any major findings. Read this first to decide if the article will be useful to you.

2. Read the Introduction/Background
   The introduction details the background and context for the research. Identify the research question and the researchers’ hypothesis.

3. Read the Discussion/Conclusion
   Skip down to the discussion section to read the findings of the research. Look for the significance and application of these findings, as well as any further research ideas proposed by the authors.
5. Skip the Methods
This section will explain the authors' experimental methods. You can skip it unless you need to know exactly how the experiment was performed or replicate it yourself.

4. Look at Figures
Most research articles contain figures like graphs or charts, often accompanied by a short caption describing their contents. They may be helpful as they concisely display the research findings.

6. Check the Bibliography/References
Glance at the bibliography to see what articles and authors are cited. This is a great way to find more articles that are relevant to your research topic.