

1. Check relevance

Before diving deep into a paper, skim through the abstract, introduction, and conclusion to ensure that the paper is relevant.

You don't want to spend 2-3 hours ending up with nothing.

2. Write synopsis

If you found the paper to be relevant, write the synopsis of the paper within concrete 3 bullet points.

- (i) What the authors did
- (ii) How they did it
- (iii) What they found.

It will establish the broader picture of the paper within your mind. Once you are certain what is it about, you can easily navigate through the paper.

3. Identify the purpose

- (i) Why do you want to read this paper?
- (ii) Do you want to understand the research methodology?
- (iii) Are you looking for a new research idea to take from this paper?

Be clear about the purpose. It will save your time and help you to focus on the specific part.

4. Read critically

Read the paper critically. This means that once you have read the paper, you should be able to answer - what are the strengths and weaknesses of this paper.

This is important so that you get the capability to assess the quality of a research piece.

5. Write key takeaways

As you go through the paper or after finishing reading, write about points like

- (i) What are the key takeaways for me from this paper
- (ii) Where I can use these takeaways
- (iii) What can be done on the top of the existing work
- (iv) Can something be improved.

You don't need to write long stories. All of this you can write within 5-10 min. Knowledge not put in writing evaporates.

6. Skim through the references

After finishing the main body, check the references.

You may find some very relevant works there too.

If such is the case, you can snowball depending upon the time you have for reading.

7. Presentation takeaways

Look at the diagrams, tables, graphs, and writing style of the paper.

Ask yourself whether such style of diagrams or graphs, etc would be good for my paper.

If the answer is yes, note it down in your takeaways.

8. Note exemplar papers

Some papers you read might be very relevant to the paper you want to write next.

Note 2-3 such papers and put them in front of yourself while writing your next paper.

It will serve as a reference guide for your paper writing.

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