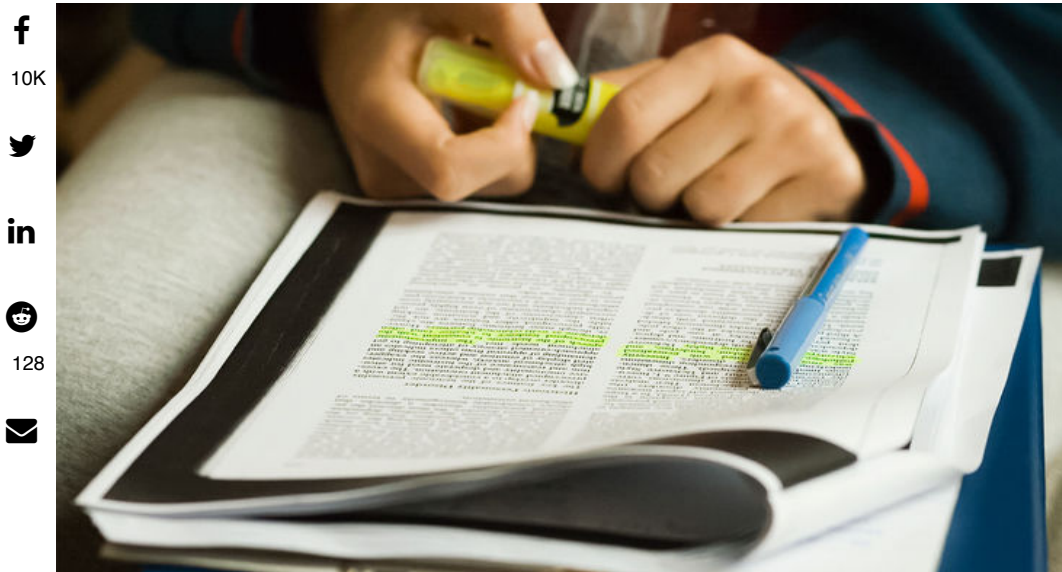


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## How to (seriously) read a scientific paper

By [Elisabeth Pain](#) | Mar. 21, 2016 , 1:15 PM

Adam Ruben's tongue-in-cheek column about [the common difficulties and frustrations of reading a scientific paper](#) broadly resonated among *Science Careers* readers. Many of you have come to us asking for more (and more serious) advice on how to make sense of the scientific literature, so we've asked a dozen scientists at different career stages and in a broad range of fields to tell us how they do it. Although it is clear that reading scientific papers becomes easier with experience, the stumbling blocks are real, and it is up to each scientist to identify and apply the techniques that work best for them. The responses have been edited for clarity and brevity.

### How do you approach reading a paper?

I start by reading the abstract. Then, I skim the introduction and flip through the article to look at the figures. I try to identify the most prominent one or two figures, and I really make sure I understand what's going on in them. Then, I read the conclusion/summary. Only when I have done that will I go back into the technical details to clarify any questions I might have.

- [Jesse Shanahan](#), master's candidate in astronomy at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut

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[How to keep up with the scientific literature](#)



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Vol 365, Issue 6454



## Table of Contents

### SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Francis's way

### CELL BIOLOGY

Tentacled microbe hints at how simple cells became complex

### EDUCATION

Grad students struggle with rising fees

### SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Open access takes root at National Cancer Institute

### EPIDEMIOLOGY

Successful Ebola treatments promise to tame outbreak

### DEVELOPMENT

'Ethical' eggs could save day-old chicks from slaughter

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