

ENG 150
How to Read Scholarly Articles

Most people follow a simple strategy when reading

- Start at the beginning.
- Read until the end.

While this might work great for short articles or novels, this is not a great strategy for reading a journal article. So how do you read one? One good piece of advice comes from an article called ["How to \(Seriously\) Read an Academic Article."](#) Jesse Shanahan, a graduate student in astronomy at Wesleyan University, describes a more academic reading approach this way:

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.

Notice that Shanahan encourages you to study a scholarly article this way:

1. Read the **abstract**.
2. **Skim** the article quickly.
3. Read the **conclusion**.
4. **Review** any details from the body of the article as necessary (as prompted by your reading of the conclusion).

If you're sure it's a credible study (i.e. if a teacher assigned it or you know it's a key article in your field of study), then you might not have to do much more. You can just think about the overall findings and decide whether or not you can use them to support your own ideas.