Reading Academic Articles

Justin de la Cruz
Atlanta University Center
Robert W. Woodruff Library
jcruz@aucr.edu | 404-978-2064
1. Reading
   a. What is it saying?
2. Analyzing
   a. How is it saying it?
3. Contextualizing
   a. How does it compare to what others are saying?
Reading


Skim through the article. What type of article is this?

- Original research
- Review article
- Clinical case study
- Clinical trial
- Perspective, opinion, commentary
Reading


Read through the introduction.

- What is the main topic / issue / problem at hand?
- What is the main argument?
- What else has been done in this area?
Analyzing

- How is the main argument defended?
- What is the provided evidence for the main argument? Is it enough to make it convincing?
- What might have been left out of the paper? How could it have been stronger?
- If you could continue this argument / research what would you investigate and write about?
Contextualizing

- What angle does the paper have?
- Are there any competing ideas?
- What came before it?
- What would come after it?
Tips for Reading and Understanding Articles

- Write a brief summary in your own words for each section. (If dense, for each paragraph.)
- Read together, understand together: form a reading group, discuss main ideas from articles.
- Figure out how this article fits into the field. Is it a majority / representative view from a popular researcher? Is it a fringe view?
- Make a list of the article’s strengths and weaknesses. (Requires an understanding of methodology and the literature...)
- Draw a simple picture or flowchart of the information.
- Find out a system of organizing and note-taking that works for you:
  - Pen and paper
  - Online notes
  - Notes in PDFs: [https://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf-reader/](https://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf-reader/)
- Collect relevant takeaways / summaries / quotes into a separate document (and make a note of where quotes are from!).