

..... Scanning an Article, quickly... ..

Be super-efficient in your researching of sources for your dissertation or thesis...

1. **Cardinal rule** – *Do not start reading the article from beginning to end!*
2. **Where to start?** – *Read the TITLE, the ABSTRACT (or introduction depending on the article style and structure), and the CONCLUSION. You should make a decision regarding the usefulness and relevance of the article for your specific research project after reading each of these three parts. If it is relevant, keep it. If it is not relevant, dump it into your “not relevant” folder or box! (Don’t throw it away, you may just want to refer to it in the future.)*
3. **What to read next?** – *If you are still in doubt, read the DISCUSSION part of the article. This will give you further detail to determine the relevance and applicability of the article to the research you are busy with. After reading the DISCUSSION, it is time to make a decision again. If the article is relevant, keep it. If it is not, dump it into the “not relevant” folder or box!*
4. **When to read the rest?** – *Only read the rest of the article once you have confirmed the relevance and applicability of the article to your work and you are ready to delve into the specific sub-topic of your research project that this article belongs to. Highlight, circle, underline or otherwise identify the most important issues in the article while you are reading. Use the white margins around the article to make your own notes as you go along. Else, if you are not using the pen and paper approach, use the software that you chose to work with to make notes and do mark-ups as you scan the article.*
5. **Summarise themes for your own future use** – *Use the system that you chose when you started on your research journey to summarise the key messages and themes of the article. This will be very helpful when you put together the literature study and the rest of your dissertation.*
6. **Integrate what you learned with your literature study** – *Include what you learned and read from the article (themes, key points) in your literature study. Link the article’s themes to the “conversation” that you are starting to summarise around the topic you are researching.*
7. **Timing** – *It takes on average 2 to 2.5 minutes to read one page of double spaced print. Use this as an indication for how long it should take you to read the article. It is not a hard and fast rule, just an indication. Consider using a time management tool to stay aware of the time you spend reading an article.*
8. **File the article in your system** – *File a hard copy or the electronic version of the article in the system that you chose to use for keeping track of the sources for your research.*

If you found this “research hack” useful, please let me know at jacques@topresearchsupport.com

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