

Reading a Paper

Psychology

The order to read a journal article in, and what to check.

The method decides whether the conclusion is worth anything.

1

Abstract

What did they do and find? Decide whether to continue.

2

Method

Sample, design, measures. This is where studies fail.

3

Results

Effect sizes and confidence intervals, not just p-values.

4

Discussion

Read for overclaiming. Does the conclusion match the design?

5

Limitations

What the authors admit, and what they omit.

RED FLAGS

Sample of 20 undergraduates

Causal language from a correlational design

No effect size reported

Conclusions beyond the population studied

Check the sample size and the design before the finding. A striking result from $n = 15$ is a hypothesis, not evidence.