Reading Scholarly Articles

A scholarly article is unique from other forms of writing because...

- Scholarly articles are a report of scholarship, or original research, written by a professional or professionals.
- Scholarly articles have a main argument and are based on evidence (such as surveys, measurements or historical texts).
- Scholarly articles may present a new theory, explain a new process or method, or review other articles on the same topic.
- Scholarly articles have been critiqued, or peer-reviewed, by other scholars and editors.

Reading scholarly articles can be challenging because...

- The author has to make an argument and support it with evidence in a small amount of space, which usually makes the writing dense.
- The author usually uses formal English and specialized terms, which means some words may be unfamiliar.
- The author must organize the article according to style guidelines or journal specifications, which means the formatting may not be intuitive.

Reading scholarly articles will be beneficial because...

- Scholarly articles contain information that comes directly from the author and their research.
- Scholarly articles allow you to come to your own conclusions, without a third party to influence your interpretation.
- Scholarly articles are considered the most reliable and most credible resource for your research.

Reading scholarly articles takes time and practice, thus effort is required to gain insight about their specific conventions, purpose, and meaning.

Remember:

A primary source is writer → publication → you.

A secondary source is writer → publication → reprinted in another location → you.

Be sure you know which kinds of sources are acceptable for your research project.
Reading Scholarly Articles

Every scholarly article has a main argument, supporting evidence, and a conclusion that you'll need to identify and understand before you can evaluate the article's usefulness.

**READ ONCE FOR CONTENT**
What is the main argument of the article?
What supporting evidence is used in the article?
What conclusion does the article come to?

**READ ONCE FOR CONTEXT**
Why was this article written?
How does the supporting evidence reinforce the main argument and conclusion of the article?

**YOUR RESPONSE**
Consider the content and the context together, what do you think of the article?

Here are some more questions for you to consider while reading the article:

**CONTENT**
- What is the main argument? Are there sub-arguments?
- What is being used as evidence: measurements, charts, examples, quotes, other items?
- What is the main conclusion? How is the evidence connected to the conclusion?
- What words do you need to define in order to understand the article? Use a dictionary!

**CONTEXT**
- Who is the author? What kind of institution does he or she work for: a university, a corporation, a governmental organization, a non-profit organization?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the author's purpose for writing the article? For example, is it to persuade the audience of a product's superiority or to disagree with a widely stated theory?
- Does the author use only objective language or language that appeals to your emotions?

**YOUR RESPONSE**
- Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?
- Is the evidence convincing? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what is the author's strongest point? What is the weakest point? Where does the author go wrong? What might your counterargument to this article be?