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Teaching and Learning Center
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA

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

> Scholarly articles are a unique kind of text

Reading scholarly articles can be challenging because…
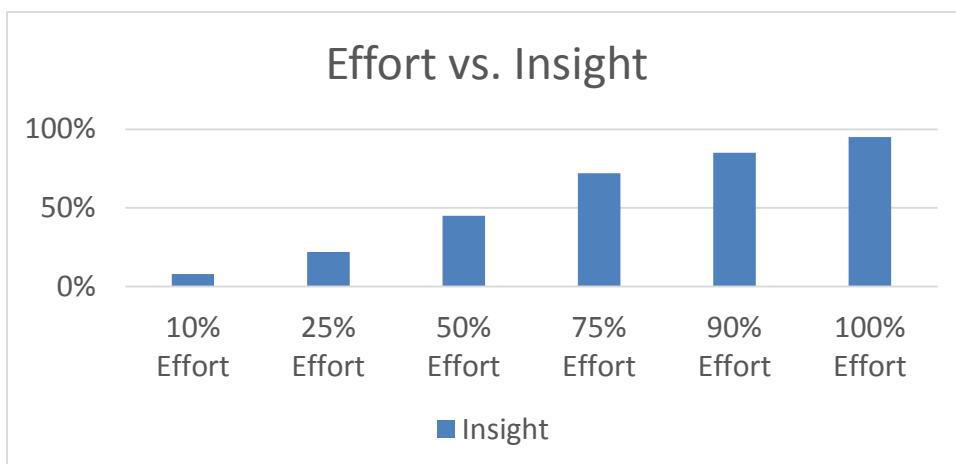
> Scholarly articles will be challenging to read

- 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

> Scholarly articles will benefit both your research papers and your critical thinking

Reading scholarly articles takes time and practice, _thus effort is required to gain insight_ about their specific conventions, purpose, and meaning.
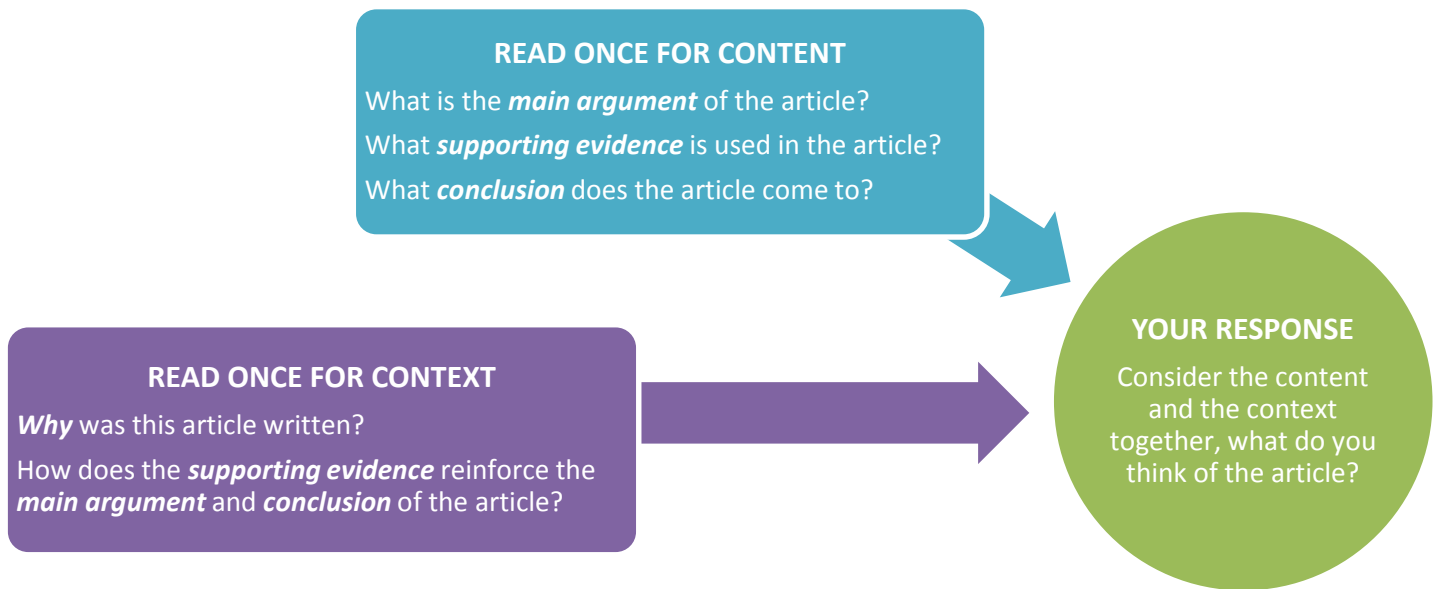
Effort vs. Insight

	10% Effort	25% Effort	50% Effort	75% Effort	90% Effort	100% Effort
Insight	~8%	~22%	~45%	~72%	~85%	~95%

■ Insight

> *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.

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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?