

Reading Philosophy and reading across the disciplines

Read actively, read with purpose.

1. Notice the title, read the abstract (or intro, if not available). Identify the general problem or question the author is discussing. Make note of the thesis (it will be in the abstract or intro) and rehearse to yourself what the central points of the argument are. You might already notice questions that come up; keep them in mind to see if they are addressed in the text.
2. As you read, check for understanding. Rephrase key points in your head. At the end of each section, ask yourself “What was the author doing in this section? What are the main claims? What did I find confusing? What are possible objections or worries about the argument here?”
3. As you read, highlight key points: definitions of terms, key argumentative moves, summaries of the argument, points you find intriguing or interesting...And take notes articulating your reactions.
4. At the end of reading, zoom out to your big questions and general concerns and thoughts on the topic, and see how they compare to what the reading says. Use this to come up with questions and larger comments.

Highlighting, note-taking, etc.: Depends on why you are reading the article! Note-taking is extremely helpful but can be a little time-consuming.

- Read and highlight first, then go over these highlights and notes and take notes based on them (not on the whole text).
- Reading (and notes) can be targeted:
 - “I just want to know what they think that is relevant to my research question” vs. “This is a rich text and I want to struggle with it and riff off of it”
- Notes can and should include your own take and questions; good idea to have a system to mark what parts are your ideas and what parts are what is in the text.

Reading articles from other fields.

- Much the same applies—you can read any text philosophically!
- More of a focus on understanding the key claims about how the world works, evidence given for those, and background picture/assumptions, than on finding a deductive argument.
- OK to focus on key claims (often in Introduction, Methodology, Discussion sections) rather than in the details of experiments. Still read those, but no expectation that you will understand the statistical analyses offered and similar points.
- Make note of terms you don’t understand and try to figure out what they mean by looking online.
- Objections: ambiguities or imprecisions; different explanations for the results of an experiment.
- Keep returning to the key philosophical themes you are interested in and thinking about the significance of these results to those themes or questions.