How to read academic papers?

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Warning:
Expect to spend several hours and read several times the same paper.

The first question you want to ask yourself before you start reading is

Why are you going to read this article?

Some possible reasons are
• To review it.
• To summarize it.
• To replicate its contribution.
• To evaluate its relevance for your own research.
Warning:
Every academic paper should be read at least twice.

First question to ask when you read an academic paper for the first time:

**What is its contribution?**

Another way to view this question is

**How is the information in this paper useful?**

After you finish reading the paper

**Summarize its contribution in 100 words or less.**
What to do after you have summarized the paper?

The second time you read a paper, you should play the Devil’s Advocate:

Read critically

Do not assume the authors are correct, be suspicious.

• Are the authors solving the right problem?
• Are there simpler solutions to the problem?
• What are the limitations of their proposed solution?
• Is the reasoning flawed?
• Is the data properly gathered and presented?
What to do after you have summarized the paper?

The second time you read a paper:

You should make notes as you read!

• On the margins
• In a different sheet

After every paragraph:

How does this paragraph contribute to the author’s main point?

Or

Is this paragraph useful?
What to do after you have criticized the paper?

Read it for a third time!

The third time you read a paper, contribute:

In which other ways can this paper be useful?

• Are there ideas that can be used to solve other questions?
• Can the contribution have other applications?

How would you expand the research using this paper?
Determining the value of its contribution: Is there a NOVELTY?

You have to compare this paper with the rest of the literature:

- Do the authors tackle a new question?
- Do the authors provide a new answer to an existing question?
- Is the application relevant for the current needs?

Novelty can take many forms.

According to some philosophers, novelty can be found by applying a dialectical relationship:

- Thesis
- Antithesis
- Synthesis
This presentation is based on

  • Last time accessed was August, 2015.

About dialectic:

http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/dialectic.htm