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Handout Video SLA 5: Scanning Articles Quickly

When you are looking for scholarly articles, you do not want to bother with articles that are not useful to you. How can you quickly tell whether a scholarly article answers your question?

Articles of this kind have a fixed structure, namely:

- *Introduction* containing a research question or hypothesis
- *Method*: the materials and methods used for the research
- *Results of the research*
- *Discussion*: in which the results are discussed and an answer is given to the research question.

You can use this standard structure to quickly evaluate an article. If you were to read every article from beginning to end, it would take far too long. That is why you should first scan an article in the following way:

- You start, of course, with the *title*. Does it contain keywords that are related to your question?
- Then, check if an *abstract* of the article is provided. An abstract is a summary and can be found at the beginning of an article. It will give you a good idea of what the article is about. Sometimes, though, an abstract can be found at the end of an article.
- Then read the *subtitles*, look at the *diagrams* and *charts*, and read any *captions*. Is the content of these relevant to your question?
- Finally, read the *conclusion* at the end of the article. It may be located at the start of the discussion or under a separate heading, Conclusion.

Does the article appear to be suitable for answering your question? Then read it carefully. This way you will have a good idea of which information is found where in the text.