

Analyzing Disciplinary Expectations Tool

Step 1: Skim reading

Skim through the paper in 3-4 minutes. That means **finding (but not reading) major sections** like the introduction and conclusion, headings, where references come, etc.

Then, **quickly read the introduction and conclusion** to roughly identify the topic of the paper. Don't stop to use a dictionary, re-read complicated sections, or try to read every word.

Step 2: Analyzing structure

What is the paper's main argument or contribution to the discipline (or thesis statement, if you can find one)? Where is this argument/contribution stated? How often is it repeated?

If there are headings, what are the heading titles (e.g. "Introduction," "Conclusion," "Results," "Discussion" etc.)? Approximately how long is each section as a percentage of the article?

1. _____ % of length: _____
2. _____ % of length: _____
3. _____ % of length: _____
4. _____ % of length: _____
5. _____ % of length: _____
6. _____ % of length: _____

How does the writer signal the start of a new section? Do they use discursive markers such as "to conclude...", "first, second, third...", "however,..." etc.? (Find a useful list of these at <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/summary-and-transition/>).

This is especially useful to consider if there are no headings.

Example signal phrases for section openings:

Does every section or part of the article contain an equal number of references? Do some sections include many or very few references?

- Yes, referenced are used equally throughout.
 No, references are used more in certain sections than others.

Sections with many references: _____

Sections with few references: _____

Step 3: Assessing argumentation

Does the writer highlight similar studies, related articles or books, or other scholarship in the area? If so, where?

- Yes. Where? _____
 No

Does the writer state exceptions or limitations to their argument? If so, in which sections?

- Yes. Where? _____
 No

Does the writer state plans for future research?

- Yes
 No

How often does the writer make claims – conclusions based on their argument – and how often does the writer use evidence to back up those claims?

What kinds of evidence does the writer use to support their ideas?

- Books
 Articles
 Government reports
 Statistics
 Experimental data
 Theories
 Other _____

How is the evidence presented?

- Writing description Appendix
 Graphs/charts Mathematical Calculations
 Tables

How much evidence is included? Is it in every paragraph?

Does the writer explain the evidence, or leave it in a long list (or e.g. include graphs without any commentary)?

What style of referencing is used? (If you don't know the proper name, write an example).

Chicago

MLA

APA

IEEE

Other: _____

Is there a references or bibliography list? What is its title, and what material does it include?

Title: _____

Includes: _____

Step 4: Understanding Style

Does the writer use a large amount of technical vocabulary that only experts would understand?

Yes

No

Aside from technical terms, is the language so complex that a regular reader (a smart undergraduate student) wouldn't understand it?

Yes. Example sentence: _____

No _____

How long are the paragraphs? How long are the sentences?

○ Paragraphs: _____

○ Sentences: _____

Does the writer use “I,” “we,” both, or neither?

- I
 - We
 - I and We
 - Neither
-

Does the writer include an engaging opening - a hook, an anecdote or sense of story?

- Yes
- No

Is the title purely descriptive or does it include some wordplay, sense of mystery, etc.?

- Descriptive title (e.g. “A study of X in...” or “A history of Y...”)
- Engaging title