# Reading Scholarly Articles

Use this article to answer the questions that follow:

* Weaver, Robert R., et al. “University Student Food Insecurity and Academic Performance.” *Journal of American College Health*, vol. 68, no. 7, Oct. 2020, pp. 727-33. *EBSCO*host, <http://proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=146946784&site=ehost-live>

In this tutorial, we will guide you through some "best practices" in reading a scholarly journal article. In the future, you can use this guide -- with your own questions and articles -- as you read other scholarly articles. Soon, these practices will become second nature.

As you go through this tutorial, we recommend that you read the questions for each section **before** you read that section of the article. This will help you to focus your reading.

For students who use screen reader assistive technology for visual disabilities, the navigation is different for each article depending on the vendor; however, this article is from Ebsco, a very common vendor. Some other vendors are less compliant with standards, making the sections less findable.

## Title

In order to orient ourselves, let's start with a basic question about the first page:

1. What is the **title** of this article? (For students who use screen reader assistive technology, the title of this article is a heading level 1, and again as a heading level 2.)

## Abstract

Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's find the **Abstract.**

(For students who use screen reader assistive technology, the abstract is available twice on the page, but it doesn’t have a heading. You can find it as the first continuous text below the heading level 2 title and immediately below “Listen.”)

The **Abstract** is a summary of the author(s)'s research findings. It's a preview to let you know what they will be presenting in the article. It is often a good idea to read the abstract first, with your research question in mind, in order to determine if you should even bother reading the whole article.

TIP: When you're evaluating scholarly articles for a research project, you can (and should) discard them, after reading just the Abstract, if you determine that they are not relevant to your research.

2. Would you use this article if your research question was:

**Is race a determining factor in which college students are food insecure?**

1. Yes, I would use this article for research
2. No, I would not use this article for research

3. What if your research question was:   
**Is there a link between food security and academic performance**?

1. Yes, I would use this article for research
2. No, I would not use this article for research

## Discussion

You've read the Title and the Abstract. Now, we recommend that you jump to the **Discussion, which includes sub-headings for Study limitations and Implications (Implications is similar to a Conclusion).** This is a big jump, but in reading the Discussion and the Conclusion, you can again see if this article will meet your research needs. Again, if it does not, set it aside. If it does, keep going. How can you evaluate if the Discussion and Conclusion meet your needs?

(For students who use screen readers, Discussion is a heading 3. It is also linked from the Contents.)

TIP: It's often a good idea to read the questions first in order to focus your reading.

4. From the first paragraph of the Discussion, will this article tell you:

* 1. why "[a]lmost half (48%) of undergraduate students in this study were food insecure"?
  2. what food insecure students can do to improve their chances of academic success?
  3. "odds of being food insecure are higher in some groups than in others…."?

Subhead: Implications (In this case, **Implications** is another word for **Conclusion**)

5. Imagine your research question is:

**What can colleges and universities do to better support students who are food insecure?**

1. Yes, this article would help me
2. No, this article would not help me

## Introduction

Time for another jump, this time backwards. Please find and skim the **Introduction**. As you skim, you might notice that the Introduction is more than one paragraph. Different articles are written differently, but in this case, the authors highlight their **research questions** (there are 3 of them) at the end of the section.

From reading this section, consider what the authors’ hypothesis might be. This is closely related to their research questions.

TIP: The Introduction is more than one paragraph.

(For students who use screen readers, Introduction is a heading 3. Introduction is also linked from the Contents.)

6. According to the Introduction, which of these is the authors’ research question? Choose all that apply.

1. “How does food insecurity relate to academic performance?”
2. “How prevalent is food insecurity among university students?"
3. “[Was] university education…viewed as a privilege afforded only to those with means?”
4. “How do university students vary with respect to the prevalence of food insecurity?”

## Methods

In the **Methods** section, the authors explain how the study worked.  This is a good time to think critically about the research that the authors have done, and whether it applies to your own research question.  Here, for example, you can learn the details of how the authors conducted their study, which elements came from a student survey, and which came from USDA or university data.

You also learn how the study was conducted. You see that an online questionnaire was given to 13,897 students, but not all of them responded (more about that in the Results section).

(For students who use screen readers, Methods is a heading 3. Its following three subsections are also heading 3s, although they should be heading 4s. It is visually apparent that they are subheadings in the PDF version of the article but not visually apparent in the HTML version. The PDF does not have any tags or headings for accessibility. Methods and its subheadings are also linked from the Contents.)

## Subhead: Design and Sample

7. What kinds of incentives were offered to encourage participation?

1. Raffle
2. T-shirts
3. $50 gift cards

## Subhead: Measures

8. Which of these variables were downloaded from the University student database? Select all that apply.

1. gender
2. GPA
3. commuter status
4. favorite food

## Results

In the **Results** section, there are a lot of numbers. The four tables, in particular, are dizzying (p 729-730). If you are not a whiz at statistics, you can actually skip this section, unless you plan to replicate this project yourself (in which case, you might need to brush up on your statistics). The important thing to learn from the Results is that "Almost half (48%) of undergraduate students in this study were food insecure." And how do we know that? It says so in the first sentence of the Discussion, on page 730 (which you’ve already read).  
  
Bottom line: Unless you are a "data" person, you can likely skip the data.

(For students who use screen readers, Results is a heading 3. Results is also linked from the Contents.)

## References

Now, let's jump to the **References** section (sometimes called **Works Cited**). In this article, there are 36 references (in this citation style, they are actually numbered!). When you've found them, scroll through. This article cites a lot of journal articles but uses some books as well.

Consider things like how old the articles are that the author is citing (in relation to their own research). As you are reading, you can also test yourself on which source types the authors cited (books, journal articles, newspaper articles, etc.).

(For students who use screen readers, References is **not** a heading. References is linked from the Contents.)

9. What kind of source is: Goldrick-Rab S. *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; 2016?

1. Book
2. Scholarly journal article
3. Newspaper article

10. What kind of source is: USDA 2012, U.S. Household Food Security Survey Module: Six-Item Short Form, 2012. Economic Research Service?

1. Book
2. Website
3. Government report

11. When were the most recent sources all published?

1. 2022
2. 2020
3. 2018

12. The first citation listed is by KVT Bui and it is a journal article. The abbreviation for the journal is Coll Stud J, which stands for College Student Journal. Does the Hunter College Libraries have a subscription to this journal? HINT: You'll have to use the Hunter College Libraries website to find this information.

13. How many sources cited here discuss the Matthew Effect? HINT: You can use the “find” command, if that helps.

1. 2
2. 12
3. 0

14. Imagine your research question was: **How are CUNY students impacted by food insecurity?** In that case, which source(s) on this list would you want to track down?

## Your own ideas

15. As you’ve finished skimming these key sections, what new question(s) about this topic does the article bring up for you?

For other helpful research tips, you can visit Hunter College Library's [Research Toolkit](http://library.hunter.cuny.edu/research-toolkit).