



Research Reading Guide of the Month
AUGUST 2003

Locke, L.F. (2003).

Use Your Study Skills.

Whether in the form of an abstract, an annotation, or a full report, most accounts of research have to be studied, not just read. Some are harder and some are easier, but it is a rare event when any reader can start at the title of a report and read straight through to the end – and really finish with a clear picture of the entire story. If you are not one of the lucky few who have a rare capacity for comprehension (and I certainly do not), then you must be like the rest of us – you will have to study rather than just read research. That means doing things like initial skimming to get an overview, skipping forward and back in the text to puzzle through difficult points, underscoring, highlighting, and writing in margins to give emphasis to what look like key points of information, and creating mental summaries as you move along.

It will not take much practice to acquire a sense of which study strategies are particularly helpful for you – and using them will improve efficiency (less time and perspiration) and increase comprehension (more understanding of the story). That represents active study and not passive reading.

I should, however, be honest about all this. Reading research is often interesting, frequently provocative, sometimes satisfying, and on memorable occasions, even exhilarating. But it is work – wholesome, respectable, and productive – but work nonetheless. Even with carefully crafted annotations, nobody is promising you a stroll in the park! It also is true, however, that with reasonable investment of time and some practice at the task, this is work you can learn how to do – and probably far better than you expect.

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