

HOW TO READ A RESEARCH PAPER

Among the questions that you should ask yourself when reading a research paper are the following.

1. What is the research paradigm that the author is using? Example paradigms are psychological experiments, formalization and theorem proving, and artifact design and construction. If the paper is part of a well established field, you should describe the field and its current state.
2. What is the problem area with which the paper is concerned? For example, "Automatic Generation of Compilers from Denotational Semantic Descriptions of the Source Code" would describe a research paper on compilation.
3. What is the author's thesis? That is, what is he/she trying to convince you of?
4. Summarize the author's argument. That is, how does the author go about trying to convince you of the thesis?
5. Does the author describe other work in the field? If so, how does the research described in the paper differ from the other work?
6. Does the paper succeed? Are you convinced of the thesis by the time that you have finished reading the paper?
7. Does the author indicate how the work should be followed up on? Does the paper generate new ideas.
8. Some papers implicitly or explicitly provide a new way of doing things or of thinking about problems. If your paper does so, describe the approach.