

### Journal Summary Assignment

Select an article related to the topic of memory and cognition from a psychological research journal that interests you. Try to select a relatively simple *empirical* article (one in which 1 or 2 experiments are reported rather than 3 or more). Avoid review articles and meta-analysis articles. They will not allow you to answer all the questions you will be expected to answer in your summary.

Your journal summary should include the following components.

1. Provide the full APA citation for the article using correct APA format.
2. Provide a copy of the article with your summary (copies will be returned) What was the purpose of the study? What was the research question? Did the author clearly show why the study was needed or important?
3. Identify the type of research methods used in the study summarized. Was this a laboratory experiment, field experiment, quasi-experiment, correlational study, or a naturalistic observation? Many researchers will use a variety of research methods in the same study. For example, some dependent variables might be studied with experimental manipulations while other measures are obtained and evaluated with correlational analyses. Check with me if you have questions about the methods reported in your article.
4. Identify the variables that were included in the research. Describe how each variable was either manipulated or measured. Indicate whether the variable was used as an independent or a dependent variable. Did these manipulations provide a good test of the research question?
5. Describe the major findings of the study.
6. Describe the author's conclusions. Explain the relation between the conclusions and the data reported. Did the author make a convincing argument for these conclusions based on the findings reported?
7. Evaluate the study. Were the manipulations credible? Were the independent variables meaningfully related to the research question? Were the measures meaningfully related to the research question? Did these findings seem persuasive to you for the author's conclusions?

**APA Format:** Include a Title Page, use appropriate headings for elements 3-7 to organize your summary, provide the APA citation as a reference at the end of the summary (need not be on a separate page, but follow APA format for the reference itself).

### Reading Research Articles

Authors of journal articles present several types of arguments in their reports. The literature review typically includes two types of arguments. The first is an argument that the research presented was needed – that the authors propose to generate evidence to answer an important research question. Thus, this first argument is an argument to support the conclusion that the research question posed is important. The second argument is an argument that the methods used in the design were appropriate to generate evidence to answer the research question posed.

A different set of arguments appears in the Discussion section, where the author draws conclusions about the research question. In this case, the author draws on the evidence, findings, and observations presented in the Results section to argue for a particular interpretation or set of conclusions. These should be related to the initial research question. Additional arguments may be included that concern the relevance of the findings for future research. Thus, authors may make arguments about two types of conclusions in their discussion sections. First, they will make arguments about the *internal consistency* of their findings: the degree to which their data support their conclusions and answer their research question. Secondly, they will make arguments about the *external consistency* of their findings: the degree to which their data are consistent with the data reported elsewhere in the literature. Both of these arguments are important for understanding the meaning of the data and how these data fit into the existing knowledge base.

A reader of research articles should identify and understand the various arguments presented in an article and then evaluate the validity of these arguments. Together, these will determine whether the paper is a strong or a weak paper. As you read the published literature, you will find that some authors do not necessarily present strong arguments for the importance of their research question, their methods, and/or their conclusions based on findings. If an author effectively builds each of these arguments, the research paper will be strong. A weak paper would be one in which one or more of the author's arguments are weak or one that presents findings that do not support the author's conclusions or are related to these conclusions in a vague way.