

WRITING FROM RESEARCH READING – TOP TIPS

It's important that you start your research by figuring out the orientation towards knowledge that your professor wants you to take. Professors are often more concerned with the **HOW** of research, and not that you become a specialist in a subject – the **WHAT** of research.

You will need to position yourself as an “overviewer” and not as someone who ultimately solves the problem. One skill involved is synthesizing (putting together) the academic “conversations” about the issue, and understanding what are the LEGITIMATE questions that can be asked about the issue.

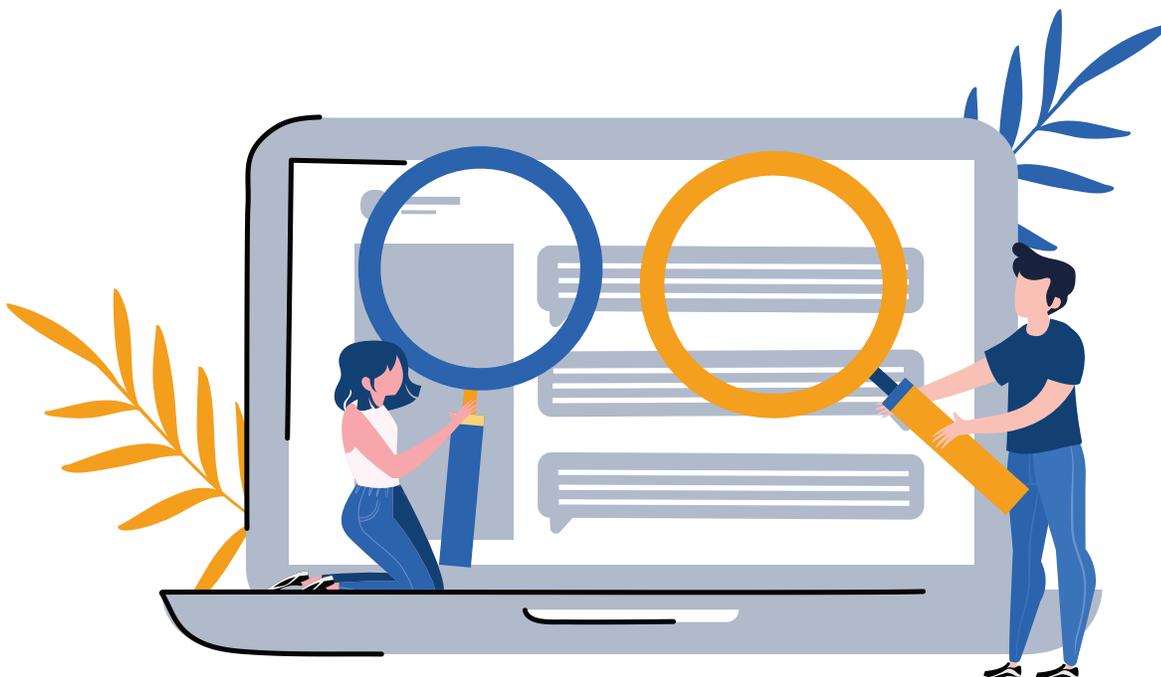
STRATEGY:

The basis of the strategy is to **start with summary**. What is the passage about overall? (Let's call this "**ABOUTNESS**")

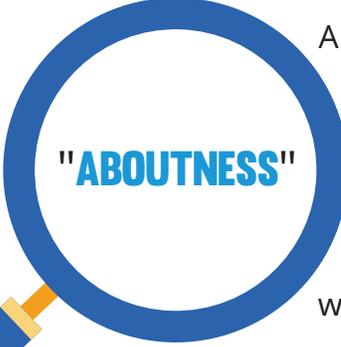
What is the "**GIST**" of the author's idea? (and follow with an academic response).

SO WHAT?

Answer the “so what” questions. For example: Why is this important? What else is relevant? What's your "take" on the matter at hand?



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"ABOUTNESS"

Answering the question "**What is this piece about overall?**" will generate some fairly abstract topics, such as " _____," or " _____."

Note how the topic is not too general ("It's about society" or "It's about helping out"), nor is it too narrow ("It's about funding women's education"). Coming up with a sense of aboutness can provide you with the substance of a topic sentence, an entry point into your essay.

Next you could ask: What is the gist of what the author is saying about this topic?" A strategy to get a "gist" of something is to finish the sentence, "**In a nutshell, the author is making the point that** _____."

Here you would paraphrase the author's words, and the result would be a summary statement, in your own words, that captures the author's main claim.



"GIST"

SO WHAT?

By the time you have done this much thinking and writing about the excerpt provided, you would likely be engaging with the content, going beyond it in your own thinking, and coming up with answers to the question "**so what?**". Taking the time to accurately summarize the ideas of someone else has this effect on readers: it holds the ideas in mind and creates a foundation for **one's own thinking** on the issue at hand.

In other words, **what's YOUR TAKE on the matter?**

This is an opportunity to present your reader with new ideas or ways of looking at an issue, or even to make a further claim. Thus, at this point you can use your own reactions and insights to complete your essay.

Picking **your own angle**, and being careful to draw from the details of the original excerpt (the original researcher would not like to be completely left out of the rest of the discussion), you are now ready to weave together the rest of your essay.

