

Homework Assignment #1, Deconstructing a Paper for Active Reading

For this assignment, chose one of the following classic physics papers and download a copy of the paper from the University Library, using your newly acquired lit-search skills:

- J.D. Watson and F.H.C. Crick, “Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acids: A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acids,” *Nature* **171**, 737 (1953). [Supplementary information](#).
- R.A. Alpher, H. Bethe, and G. Gamow, “The Origin of Chemical Elements,” *Phys. Rev.* **73**, 803 (1948). [Supplementary information](#).
- F. Reines and C.L. Cowan, Jr., “Detection of the Free Neutrino,” *Phys. Rev.* **92**, 830 (1953). [Supplementary information](#).
- I. Giaever, “Electron Tunneling between Two Superconductors,” *Phys. Rev. Lett.* **5**, 464 (1960). [Supplementary information](#).

The supplementary information for each paper is provided to help you understand the content of the paper, but do the homework exercises on the paper itself.

The purpose of this assignment is to practice active reading techniques, which will help you to *understand* physics papers and that replicates the method that experienced physicists use to read papers. It will also show you how your own papers should be organized and what they should emphasize. The assignment consists of **eight** parts—be sure to do them all!

1. Download a copy of one of the papers; use the supplementary material only if you need help understanding the paper.
2. Read the first paragraph of the paper, and then, without looking at the rest of the paper, write a several-sentence description of what you think the rest of the paper will tell you.
3. Look at the figures and tables next. Write a new several-sentence description of what you think the main points of the paper will be.
4. Read the first sentence of each paragraph of the paper. (Don’t read anything else, just the first sentence of each paragraph.) Paraphrase the sentences in your own words and write them down. **Highlight** any sentences that you don’t understand and make a note of them for this item.
5. Look at your sentences. Can you see a logical progression of ideas? Summarize the logical argument in a short paragraph.
6. Go back to one of the sentences that you highlighted. Study the corresponding paragraph in the paper. Does it answer your questions? If you still don’t understand the sentence you highlighted, write a strategy you could use to find out what it means (including looking at the supplementary material).
7. Read the conclusions section of the paper. Does it adequately recap the main ideas presented in the paper? Did the authors support their conclusions with evidence?
8. Comment on the overall organization of the paper. Were the main points clearly identified and supported by evidence? Could you follow the authors’ logical argument?

Upload your completed assignment to the my.physics portal by **Friday, January 31, 9 p.m.** Assignments submitted after the deadline will have points deducted. Late assignments may be uploaded to my.physics by 8:59 p.m. Sunday, February 2. To submit an assignment after the late deadline, [email it to Celia](#).

This assignment is not rewrite eligible.

Total—50 points