Reading a two-column paper

A one-page exercise for comparing screen size and reading layout.

The reading task

Open the paper at a normal desk distance. Read this column from the first line to the last, then move to the top of the next column. A usable setting should let you follow the reading order and find your place after a brief look away.

A number worth copying

The catalog includes 27 boxes. The archivist logged 18 items in box four and 31 items in box seven. Copy those two counts to a note, keeping the box number with each one. Look back and check that the order is still correct.

Footnotes and citations

Small details often decide whether you reach for the zoom controls. Check the footnote below, then return to this line. Keep track of any change to the zoom level or the window position.

A figure worth checking

The example in Figure 1 uses invented counts. Compare the outlined and filled bars. Find the pair with the smallest gap, then record both values. Getting the labels and values into view together matters as much as seeing the bars.

Keep the source in sight

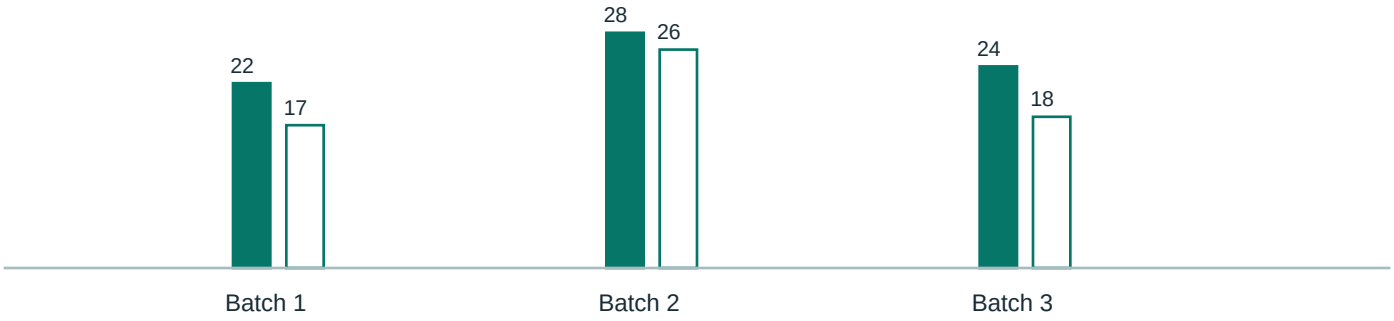
Open an empty document next to the paper. Write one sentence reporting the counts for box seven and the smallest gap in the chart. Try returning to the source line with the note window still open.

Record what changed

Repeat the exercise at the same operating-system scale. Note the reader mode, sidebar position and the width of the notes window. If you switch to a different machine later, those details will help explain the difference.

Figure 1. Sample batches

Invented counts. Each pair shows logged and checked items.



1. The catalog and chart values are fictional. The body text is 10 pt and this note is 8 pt.