

5 Quick Tips for Dealing With Information Overload

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While advances in technology over the past several decades' have made it easier than ever to stay up to date in a particular field, the constant flood of information has also made it more difficult for researchers to stay focused. "Information overload" is when you are faced with too much information to fully process. Anyone with a smartphone can admit that the easy access to endless information often results in less productivity, not more. But as researchers, it is critical to learn ways to fight back against information overload. How can you stay sharp and concentrate on what really matters? Here, we offer you some crucial tips on how to avoid information overload while still staying updated with the necessary information.

Downsides of Too Much Information

In today's information-rich environment, researchers are faced with more information than one can hope to process in a lifetime. Each year [more than 2 million research papers are published](#). There are more than 28,000 journals showcasing important and new discoveries all the time. Because of this, it can be difficult to know where to start when you want to find something specific or stay up to date on key developments relevant to your work. Social media offers a deluge of distracting notifications, emails, and updates that make you feel like you'll never catch up.

This information overload can lead to a familiar dilemma for many researchers—how do I know that I have done “enough” research to start writing something? The fear of missing out (FOMO), isn't just a social media phenomenon—it can make researchers fear that they are missing out on some essential articles or studies. This, in turn, can lead to stress, procrastination, and even apathy towards your work.

Finding Needles in the Information Haystack

If any of this sounds familiar to you, take comfort in the fact that [you are not alone](#)! However, as this is such a common issue, there are a number of tips that can help you cope with the information overload or even prevent it in the first place.

- **Feel free to ignore information:** Let's face it, plenty of the information we encounter every day is of low quality or irrelevant to us. By allowing yourself the freedom to ignore new information, you can reduce the FOMO that leads so many of us to exist in a constant state of low-level anxiety.
- **Use information management tools:** Filter, filter, filter! Tools like [ScienceOpen search](#), [Google Scholar alerts](#), and [Feedly](#) let you curate the information you're receiving while still making it possible to stumble across new sources.
- **Skim as needed:** You don't need to waste your time reading every single article in depth! Glancing through the abstracts of a study or comments on an article can tell you the key points you need to know.
- **Do use social media- judiciously:** Although social media can be a painful source of distraction, it is still an important source of information if used well. Create a separate Twitter for your professional life where you exclusively follow journals and scientists relevant to your current or future projects. Turn off your notifications and set aside a time each day to check your news feed.
- **Divide and conquer:** If you're working in a team, [delegate the responsibility for information to different members](#). Encourage each person to take on the task of specializing in one specific aspect of your research. This way, you can relax knowing you don't need to know everything to get ahead.

Do you have any other tips for avoiding information overload? How do you reduce FOMO and keep yourself moving ahead with work? Let us know your thoughts in the comments below.

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