Paper reading session playbook

What is a paper reading session?

An ambassador-led session where researchers, students, faculty, and practitioners discuss two research papers in depth. Each paper has a LEAD and about 45 minutes of discussion. The sessions are open to all fields and participants from any institution

Outcomes:

Read: Get people reading current research closely and in advance, not skimming an abstract.
Discuss: Create a genuine two-way research discussion rather than a lecture.
Question: Make it safe to ask basic questions and to challenge what a paper claims.
Learn: Send people away with methods, ideas and reading habits they can use in their own work.
Repeat: Build a monthly rhythm so single sessions add up to a research culture. People attending these sessions will have the option to join a **WhatsApp community for upcoming sessions.**

Roles

Ambassador (owns delivery):

- Pick two papers and confirm one LEAD for each
- Moderate on the day, keep the discussion two-way, and hold time
- **Collect attendance**, take the group picture, and publish the recap
- Fix the date and the LEADs for the next session before people leave

Key Steps:

- Decide on date, time (90 mins slot) & confirm with Arathy.
  Suggested time: Saturdays 4-6PM

Steps

Timelines are indicative and may be compressed for a first session, a smaller group, or a visiting speaker.

Phase	Ambassador responsibilities	Output
Phase 0 **Commit** T-4 to T-3 weeks	• Choose the research area or theme. • Confirm co-organisers and an institutional contact. • Fix the date, time, and room; convey to Arathy. • Check seating, projector, screen, and whiteboard.	• Date and time • Venue confirmed • Organising team • Theme agreed
Phase 1 **Papers & LEADs** T-3 to T-2 weeks	• Select two papers, with ~45 minutes for each. • Confirm one strong LEAD per paper. • Prefer experienced researchers, authors, or regular paper-readers. • Agree on the format and prepare a few discussion questions.	• Two papers + links • Two LEADs confirmed • Format per paper • Draft questions
Phase 2 **Announce** T-2 weeks	• Will be done by Arathy	• Luma page live • Registrations open • Flyer + social post • Papers published
Phase 3 **Mobilise** T-2 weeks to T-1 day	• Share the Luma link with institutions, labs, alumni, students, and industry groups. • Confirm LEAD readiness and collect slides if needed. • Send a reminder about 24 hours before. (Will be done by Arathy) • Keep the attendance QR code ready. (Will be shared by Arathy)	• Registrations tracked • Reminder blast sent • LEAD material ready • Attendance QR ready
Phase 4 **Deliver** Session day	• Check the room, projector, and internet beforehand. • Start with brief introductions and explain the purpose. • Encourage questions and discussion throughout. • Keep each paper discussion to about 45 minutes. • Note useful questions, ideas, and collaboration opportunities.	• Session delivered • Both papers discussed • Discussion captured • Time held
Phase 5 **Amplify & Close** T+1 day to T+1 week	• Ask everyone to complete the attendance form. • Take a group photo and share a short post. • Tag participants, ANRF, Dr. Shiv, and PK. • Thank the LEADs and share paper links with registrants. • Confirm the next session date and LEADs.	• Attendance submitted • Group picture • Recap post published • Next session dated

ANRF programme office (enables):

- Share this playbook, sample event pages and reference posts
- Amplify session announcements and recaps across ANRF channels
- Maintain the central record of attendance at sessions across the country
- Connect ambassadors running sessions in different cities

Designing the session

Illustrative session flow (90–120 minutes)

From start	Segment
00:00–00:10	Arrival, sign-in, and a quick round of introductions, introduce the ANRF Ambassador Program and its objectives in brief
00:10–00:15	Framing: why we read together, the two papers, and how the discussion will run
00:15–01:00	Paper 1 , LEAD walkthrough, with questions and discussion built in throughout
01:00–01:10	Break and informal networking, attendance form
01:10–01:55	Paper 2 , LEAD walkthrough, with questions and discussion built in throughout
01:55–02:05	Open floor: what to read next month, and who wants to LEAD
02:05–02:15	Attendance form once more, group picture, and close

Times run from the start of the session, so the flow works at any start time.

Papers and LEADs

- Ideally two papers, with roughly 45 minutes of discussion each and one LEAD per paper
- The LEAD may walk through the paper, highlight the important sections, or prepare a short deck
- Choose carefully: a regular reader of papers, an author of the paper, or a seasoned researcher
- The quality of the session depends significantly on the LEADs and moderators

Running the discussion

- This should not become a 45-minute lecture; keep it two-way and discussion-oriented
- The LEAD introduces the paper, research question, approach, key results, strengths and limitations
- Build in questions and discussion throughout, not only at the end
- If there's no response from the participants, feel free to pause the LEAD and interact with the participants to ensure that they are on the same page as the LEAD.
- It is perfectly fine if participants have not read the entire paper, or do not know all the details
- The LEAD need not have every answer; the goal is a good research discussion, not total recall
- Having a few discussion questions prepared in advance will help

Discussion prompts to keep ready (pick a few per paper)

Problem and motivation	What problem is the paper solving? Why does it matter now? Who benefits if it works?
Approach	What is the core idea? What would you have tried instead, and why?
Evidence	Are the experiments, datasets and baselines convincing? What is missing?
Strengths and limitations	What holds up on a close reading? What would you challenge as a reviewer?
Reproducibility	Could you reproduce this? What would it take to use it in your own work?
What next	What follow-up work does this open up? Could it be a project or a paper for someone in the room?

Communications and amplification

Trigger	Communication	Purpose
Papers & LEADs locked	Luma event page, at least two weeks ahead	Open registrations and publish the papers with links
Luma page live	Flyer and post on LinkedIn, X and WhatsApp	Reach researchers beyond your own institution
LEADs confirmed	LEAD announcement creative	Build credibility and interest in the papers
24 hours before	Luma Blast reminder to registrants	Reduce no-shows; prompt a last read of the papers
Session day	Group picture and a live post	Capture the moment while the room is together
Post-session	Recap post + participant amplification	Extend reach; tag ANRF, Dr. Shiv and PK to amplify

Flyers and announcement creatives are viewed mostly as thumbnails, keep the date, venue and paper titles legible at small display sizes. LEAD announcements need a photograph, name, designation, organisation and the paper being led.

Closure

Close-out checklist.

- Attendance: everyone present has filled the attendance form
- Papers: titles, links, LEAD names and any slides used
- Participation: city, institutions represented and headcount
- Communications: group picture, social posts and links
- Follow-up: questions, ideas and collaboration offers that came up
- Next session: date fixed, candidate papers, and LEADs approached

Attendance form for participants: Click Here
Sample Luma event page for inspiration: Click Here
Sample announcement post for inspiration: Click Here
Sample recap post for inspiration: Click Here

Questions on organising a session: pk.guru@iiit.ac.in, arathyramachandran303@gmail.com

Attendance form

Make it a habit

It would be wonderful if you can make this a once-a-month activity. A single session is useful, but consistency and repeatability are important if we want to build a research culture and make a difference over time. Thank you for helping organise a Paper Reading Session.

Read. Discuss. Question. Learn. Repeat.

FAQs

1. **Is there a criterion for minimum attendance?**

   No, but you also don't want to put in all the effort to have lean attendance. Our intent here is to do it regularly and to create a culture of scientific discussions. So the more, the merrier. Based on the numbers from the past sessions, anything around 50+ will be good. But don't get stressed about getting people. It is not only the quantity, but also the quality of people who come and what they do next.

2. **Is the session supposed to be conducted within 9-5, or are timings flexible?**

   Not necessarily. In academic institutions, holding reading sessions during regular weekday hours would increase attendance. But at the same time, weekend evening hours would suit working professionals better. Doing it in a reasonable time and in a way that is accessible to everyone is the goal.

3. **Can the host be the lead?**

   The host can be the LEAD for the first session, but we strongly recommend getting other LEADs for subsequent sessions. We would like to keep it diverse and inclusive in the long run.

4. **Is there a need for the reading sessions to align with a thematic area defined by ANRF?**

   No. The papers can be on any research topic that is of interest to the local community. Of course, they can choose topics related to ANRF thematic areas if useful, but there is no requirement for such alignment.