

How to Write a Literature Review

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Important Fact: A literature review and a book review are not the same thing!

Introduction

A literature review inspects scholarly articles, books, and other sources like dissertations, lab experiments, surveys, and interviews or other primary sources. Unlike a book review you may have written in high school, it examines everything that may be written about a particular topic, theory, or research. A literature review is meant to analyze information about key themes or issues relevant to the topic at hand. In order to write a literature review, you must research your topic to learn what has been written.

Another important part of writing the literature review is critical appraisal. Through research, information and sources are found, critical appraisal is meant to analyze the literature and determine the relationship between the sources.

Recommended Writing Process

Steps to writing an effective literature review:

1. Find a Topic
 - ✓ Brainstorm
 - ✓ Think about your area of study. What interests you? What is something that you wouldn't mind conducting plenty of research on?
 - ✓ It is important not to pick a topic that is too broad.
2. Gather sources
 - ✓ Use the databases via our library.
 - ✓ Focus on your topic: You also want to make sure that once you have your topic, you don't go off topic with your source hunting.

- ✓ Read your sources: A literature review requires you to point out the key themes of your topic. You should summarize what you read briefly, but make sure you hit the key themes.

3. Evaluate your chosen sources

- ✓ Look at the author. Is this author an expert or just an ordinary person? The credentials of the author can help determine whether the source is worth the time of reading.
- ✓ What is the main focus of the source? Does it have the same key themes you have or are they different?
- ✓ Look at what the source is arguing. It is important to write multiple perspectives to the argument, but you want more sources that argue the same thing you are. It will help to back you up.
- ✓ It is also important to see if there are any gaps in the information. Is the source questionable?

4. Writing it down

- ✓ Introduction:
 - Identify the topic
 - What is the significance of the topic?
 - A thesis statement. The thesis statement should state what you have learned and what you are arguing about your topic. Summarize the conclusion you have reached from your research.
- ✓ Body:
 - Write an analysis of your findings, *not* a description.

- Write an analysis of your findings, *not* a description.
 - There should be multiple paragraphs that address more than one source each. Organize the paragraphs based on your thesis and based on the importance and how they relate to the key themes of the literature. If there are two sources that are needed and share some ideas, discuss them together in the same paragraph.
 - DO NOT address the sources alphabetically. This does not add to the clarity and understanding of the key themes. The paragraphs should be organized to better understand the key topic.
 - The body is often organized under headings and subheadings.
 - There will be authors that agree and disagree with you. Make sure you support what your argument is.
- ✓ Conclusion:
- Review the introduction
 - Highlight previous research that you found and take it back to the purpose for your own conducted research.
 - Here is where you summarize what YOU found.
 - Analyze what your research was saying about the literature. What leads you to your overall conclusion?
 - Address where future research about the topic to go.
- ✓ Citations
- For a social sciences paper, usually that paper is going to be written in APA format. What format you use all depends on what your teacher

wants. You could be using any one of a variety like: APA, MLA, ASA, etc.

- For in-text citations for paraphrasing and quoting, if the author's last name is used earlier in that sentence, you would put the date in parenthesis right after the name.

Example: According to Jones (2001), George Washington crossed the Delaware in 1716 (p. 2).

- If the author's name is not stated early in the sentence, you would use the whole citation at the end of the sentence.

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