

Writing A Literature Review

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I. Introduction

A **literature review** is a text of a scholarly paper, which includes the current knowledge including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. **Literature reviews** are secondary sources, and do not report new or original experimental work.

II. General Guidelines to Writing a Literature Review

- Introduce the literature review by pointing out the major research topic that will be discussed
 - Identify the broad problem area but don't be too global (for example, discussing the history of education when the topic is on specific instructional strategy)
 - Discuss the general importance of your topic for those in your field
 - Don't attempt to cover everything written on your topic
 - You will need to pick out the research most relevant to the topic you are studying
 - You will use the studies in your literature review as "evidence" that your research question is an important one
 - It is important to cover research relevant to all the variables being studied.
 - Research that explains the relationship between these variables is a top priority.
- You will need to plan how you will structure your literature review and write from this plan

III. Organizing Your Literature Review

- Topical Order—organize by main topics or issues; emphasize the relationship of the issues to the main "problem"
- Chronological Order—organize the literature by the dates the research was published
- Problem-Cause-Solution Order—Organize the review so that it moves from the problem to the solution
- General-to-Specific Order—(Also called the funnel approach) Examine broad-based research first and then focus on specific studies that relate to the topic
- Specific-to-General Order—Try to make discuss specific research studies so conclusions can be drawn

IV. Literature Review

- After reviewing the literature, summarize what has been done, what has not been done, and what needs to be done
- Remember you are arguing your point of why your study is important!
- Then pose a formal research question or state a hypothesis—be sure this is clearly linked to your literature review
- All sources cited in the literature review should be listed in the references
- To sum, a literature review should include introduction, summary and critique of journal articles, justifications for your research project and the hypothesis for your research project

V. Common Errors Made in Lit Reviews

- Review isn't logically organized
- Review isn't focused on most important facets of the study
- Review doesn't relate literature to the study
- Too few references or outdated references cited
- Review isn't written in author's own words
- Review reads like a series of disjointed summaries
- Review doesn't argue a point

- Recent references are omitted
- Writing the Literature Review

VI. Plagiarism includes (Galvan, pg. 89):

1. Using another writer's words without proper citation
2. Using another writer's ideas without proper citation
3. Citing a source but reproducing the exact word without quotation marks
4. Borrowing the structure of another author's phrases/sentences without giving the source
5. Borrowing all or part of another student's paper
6. Using paper-writing service or having a friend write the paper

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