

What is a Literature Review?

Each literature review is based upon a question or topic. Your review of literature will discuss, summarize, and synthesize research relating to your research question or topic. Through searching and assessing the literature relating to your research question, your work is positioned within the context of the greater field of knowledge. The review provides a basis for further study and additional projects. It is an in-depth review, not just an annotated bibliography with a line or two on each article or book.

Dr. Jianjun Wang, a highly regarded researcher and professor at California State University, Bakersfield, notes, "In many cases, students tend to review the literature, and end up with no conclusion.... I suggest to them to state something like 'It becomes clear that there is a need to conduct the study' they are proposing. One of purposes for literature review is to justify the need for their investigation."

Dr. Wang also suggests, "The review of literature is often divided into topic areas with periodic summary discussions and well-designed connecting sentences."

What is the purpose of writing a review of literature?

- Demonstrate quality research including gathering and assessing data
- Find useful data and sources.
- Gather means to conduct research.
- Offer perspective, background, and depth to the research and writing you are doing.
- Develop a rationale or theoretical basis for your project.
- Demonstrate awareness of the research already done on your topic.
- Provide a rationale, theoretical basis, and context for your project.
- Cite references and make comments.
- Understand and assess conflicting points of view or data.

What writing style and format shall I use?

The review of literature is completed in clear, concise, formal writing. Use the APA style sheet for specifics. There are several great sites for APA on the web. If you need specifics about good writing, refer to Strunk and White's classic, The Elements of Style.

Strunk and White: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

APA tutorial: <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/tutorials/apatutorial/tutorialindex.html>

And other guides that are highly useful:

<http://www.apastyle.org/previoustips.html>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>

APA citations for electronic media: <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>

None of these sites preclude the use of the standard for APA, The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Ed.

For uniformity and readability, use double space with one inch margins and 12 point Times Roman or similar type.

What are the parts of a review of literature?

The introduction identifies the topic, discusses trends, and sets out the scope of the review, briefly relating it to your project.

The body considers the various topics and sub-topics of the literature. Summaries of studies are used along with discussion of methodology, conclusions, and comparisons.

The conclusion summarizes the major contributions to the field and provides the context for your project.

How will your Literature Review be assessed?

Check out this rubric:

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Courses/Ed690DR/grading/literaturereviewrubrique.html>

More about Literature Reviews:

<http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>

<http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/tutorials/litreviewpages/> (This one even has profs talking about LRs.)

http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature_review.html

(Excellent detail and explanation.)