



Talk about writing

Literature Review

A literature review is an overview of the most recent, relevant, and renowned research in a given field. This type of written work summarizes and discusses what other credible authors, researchers, and educators have written on a topic that recaps to the reader those authors' most relevant findings. It typically reveals how different research articles and debates within a field have progressed through contrast and comparison of different studies. It may be organized chronologically with the oldest research first, by grouping related studies together (either in terms of similar methodologies, findings, arguments, etc.), or by contrasting opposing viewpoints.

Literature reviews may be a section within a research paper that demonstrates the writer's familiarity with the field/argument/topic being written about, or it may be a stand-alone project.

The types of sources a writer will need to gather depend on a professor's instructions, as well as the overall goal in completing the literature review. The sources used in a literature review may include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, legislation, and organizational reports on the topic.

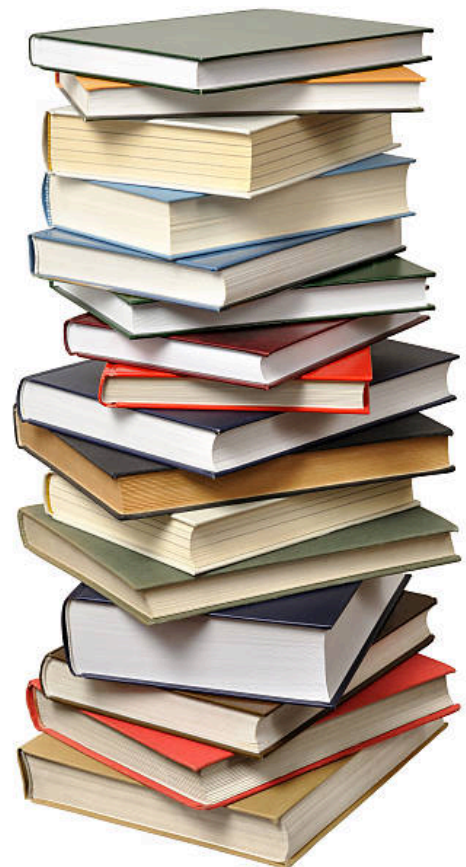
How a Literature Review Differs from a Research Paper

Goals of a *Research Paper*

- Shares original studies or findings (often by analyzing primary sources)
- Advances an author's argument through analysis and interpretation of primary source data

Goals of a *Literature Review*

- Analyzes scholarly publications and how they correlate in order to
 - evaluate or critique the current state of research about a topic
 - identify gaps or limitations in research about a topic
 - show how research on a specific topic can improve and move forward
- Summarizes and synthesizes previous scholars' arguments and ideas





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Constructing a Literature Review

1. Identify and define your topic

(e.g. causes and effects of stress, gender bias in public education, effects of federal finance regulation, etc.)

2. Conduct a literature search

- **Visit the university's reference librarian desk**, chat with a librarian via the Lewis University Library website, or call them (815-836-5306) for help locating resources related to your topic
- **Know how many sources to include** by reviewing assignment instructions.
- **Consider what type of sources you should use.** Academic books and peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles are most suited, but organizational reports and group policy statements are also sometimes acceptable, depending on your discipline.
- **Review a reference list, bibliography, or works cited section from other articles on your topic.** They may be good starting points for finding articles for your literature review before doing your own article search.
- **Make sure you have carefully refined your topic.** Often, student research topics are too broad, making it difficult to synthesize the sources they find. Narrow your research question and keywords so that they focus on a specific place or demographic. For example, if you were researching charter schools, you might want to narrow your topic further to focus on charter schools in a specific city, neighborhood, or that serve a specific economic bracket. You might also focus on how a specific group of students (e.g. high schoolers, multilingual writers, etc.) are impacted by charter schools.

3. Review your sources and take notes

As you review your sources and take notes, it is important to ask the following questions so that you have a thorough understanding of them. These questions will help you evaluate the currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose of each work.

Questions to Ask About Your Sources

1. Does the author have a clearly defined problem or issue with a stated significance?
2. What is the author's methodology (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, theoretical, critical)? How well does this orientation/method help address the stated significance?
3. Does the author have a theoretical framework that shapes their research and findings (Ex. Marxist, positivist, postmodernist, feminist, critical race theory, etc.)?
4. Does the author acknowledge literature pertinent to the author's own study, even literature which may disagree with the author's argument?
5. Does the author seek to remain free of bias with balanced observations (objective) in their research, or do personal suggestions and interpretations direct all findings (subjective)?
6. Does the information create new understanding of the issue? How is it useful for the field?
7. How does the text specifically relate to the questions you're exploring?



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4. Organize your notes and related thoughts--and consider creating an outline.

A literature review is usually composed of an introduction, body, and conclusion.

Introduction:

Similar to a traditional paper, this section previews the topic that will be explored in the literature review. More importantly, this section outlines why the topic is exigent or timely—and why it needs to be explored now.

- The introduction may comment on the scope of the research, specifying the limits of the literature you are researching and discussing. For example, if you are researching wartime diaries, you may specify gender, time period, language of origin, published or unpublished works, and war.
- As the introduction states the overall general findings, you may also comment on the availability or gaps of sources within the field/topic.

Conclusion:

In this section, you should review what you have learned and may even make a suggestion for what direction the conversation or research on your topic should take.

5. Write the literature review

Now you should be ready to begin writing the literature review itself. Be sure to revise as needed—and visit the Writing Center!

Writing Tips:

- Emphasize key points in each source, then consider and discuss what they seem to be saying as a whole.
- Be sure that your writing doesn't simply paraphrase your sources. Whenever possible, discuss your own interpretations.
- Consider the strengths and weaknesses of each source.
- Use subheadings and appropriate paragraphing to improve readability

Body:

This is where you discuss what you have found in the literature more in depth. The approach to this might be different depending on what you as the writer would like to focus on. You can organize this information in a variety of ways: You might group together sources with similar themes, by comparing and contrasting their findings, by presenting them in their order of publication, or by discussing together those that use similar methods. Be sure to share a summary of each source's purpose, methods, evidence/data, and conclusions.

**Note that a literature review should not mirror an annotated bibliography. You should not simply summarize the sources. Rather, the body of the paper should involve synthesis (i.e. discussion of the sources' relationships to each other).*



Literature Review Example

Here is an example of a few sections from a strong literature review. Pay close attention to the words or phrases that have been **bolded**. These are signal phrases that show how the authors are evaluating sources—and comparing and contrasting them with other scholarly publications.

Srirahayu, D. P., Eliyana, A., & Anugrah, E. P. (2022). The antecedents and consequences of organizational learning in the library: A systematic literature review. *IFLA Journal*, 48(4), 717–726.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03400352211066939>

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2000), this organizational learning activity consists of three aspects: (1) knowledge acquisition; (2) knowledge sharing; and (3) knowledge use. Knowledge is obtained by acquiring information and ideas from the external environment, and through sharing information and ideas in seminars and formal or informal discussions within the organization. The competitive advantage obtained from this knowledge can be seen in its application in the organization. **Hence**, the organization and its stakeholders get added value from the application of that knowledge. Organizational learning is the development of new knowledge or insights that have the potential to influence behaviour (Slater and Narver, 1995). **This is in accordance with** Daft and Weick (1984), who express that organizational learning can be divided into three stages: (1) finding and gathering information; (2) interpreting the information; and (3) learning to use the information practically.

The success of organizational learning depends on the company's tendency to learn, such as a commitment to learning or a learning culture within the organization, open-mindedness, an organizational value that brings about learning efforts, and a shared vision. These serve as a direction for individuals to adjust their commitment and conformity to the various company goals. The views of each individual are **aligned to achieve a common** interpretation (Sinkula et al., 1997). Organizational learning **relates** to the experiences and actions of organizational members (Goh and Ryan, 2002), from gathering new knowledge to implementing it in the organization.

The results of previous research show that individuals in organizations, including managers, improve their competence through organizational learning (Karunanont and Karwowski, 2011) and self-reflection (Knipfer et al., 2013). In Chahal et al.'s (2016) research, organizational learning was a mediating variable between high-performing human resources practices and business performance. Single- and multiple-loop learning can be applied through the culture of organizations and by building corporate memory (Hu et al. 2015). The use of technology for the implementation of organizational learning for informal learning is needed in organizations (Za et al., 2014), **especially** for the storage of corporate memory and the knowledge possessed by employees. Organizational memory is very useful for sharing knowledge to improve the learning culture in organizations (Shukla et al., 2020).

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Consulted Sources

Northwestern University Center for the Writing Arts. NUWrite: A Collection of Writing Resources, Northwestern University, The Writing Place. Sage Journals, Literature Review Example.