

How to Write a Mini Literature Review

A literature review is a piece of discursive prose, not a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another.

When do Researchers Conduct Literature Reviews?

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TO:

1. Write a [review paper](#) \Leftarrow (that's you)
2. Write the introduction (and discussion) of a [research paper](#)
3. Embark on a [new area of research](#)
4. Write a research proposal

What's the Function of a Literature Review?

and don't say... "to review the literature"

What's the Function of a Literature Review?

- **SUMMARIZE** the literature
- **EVALUATE** the literature
- **SHOW RELATIONSHIPS** between different studies (e.g., differences in methodology)
- And in a research proposal - **SHOW HOW PUBLISHED WORK RELATES** to your work.

As Guides to the Published Literature...

...Reviews must be:

- **Accurate:** e.g., Citations correct, findings attributed to authors correct.
- **Complete:** i.e., Include all important papers (not every paper written on the topic).

What is the Literature?

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- **JOURNAL ARTICLES:** Most up-to-date but still about 2 yrs old.
- **INTERNET SOURCES:** Use only refereed electronic journals.
- **CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:** Latest research, but not yet published as full papers.
- **GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATE REPORTS:** Good resources for commissioned research.
- **THESES AND DISSERTATIONS:** Limited use, may be difficult to obtain, researcher usually inexperienced.
- **BOOKS:** Less up to date than journals, can be a good starting point, e.g., Annual Reviews.

What Kinds of Questions do Literature Reviews Answer?

What Questions do Literature Reviews Answer?

1. What do we know about the area of inquiry?
key concepts, factors, variables?
2. What are the relationships between key concepts, factors, variables?
3. What are the current theories?

What Questions do Literature Reviews Answer?

4. What are the inconsistencies and other shortcomings?
5. What needs further testing because evidence is lacking, inconclusive, contradictory, limited?

What Questions do Literature Reviews Answer?

6. What designs or methods are faulty?

7. Why study this question further?

8. What contribution will your work make?

Avoid These Traps

- **Trying to read everything:** Try to read the most relevant work instead.
- **Reading but not writing:** Writing is a way of thinking...write many drafts.
- **Failing to keep bibliographic information:** Remember that you'll be writing a page entitled "References" at some point.
- **Organizing your review chronologically:** *Organize your paper by ideas.*

Do Review Papers Have Abstracts?

- **Yes**, but there are two kinds of abstract:
 - **Informative: Used for research reports.** They summarize the study, including the findings and conclusions.
 - **Descriptive: Used for reviews.** They summarize the subject of the review and the approach the reviewer has taken in his or her coverage of the subject. *This type of abstract does not report original findings.*

A Good Literature Review is FOCUSED

Remember your
purpose:

- Read with purpose
- Write with purpose

Example of a Literature Review

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An Outline of the Previous Example

- Forecasts of increasing rate of AR/RS introduction (1)
- Storage assignment/interleaving policies (Hausman, Schwartz, Graves (6, 7)
- Comparison of algorithms for handling orders (Elsayed (3), Elsayed & Stern (4).
- Design of AS/RS & determination of throughput (Karasawa et al. (9), Azadivar (2), Parry et al. (11)
- Optimal handling unit (Steudel (13), Tanchoco & Agee (14)
 - with pallet size/unit load (Tanchoco et al (15) Grasso & Tanchoco (5)
 - best size gives savings Noprmandin (10)
 - simulation model (Kadosh (8)
 - stochastic flow (Kadosh (8), Rosenblatt & Roll (12)
- Summary of previous research - container size affects overall warehousing cost
- New research - an analytical framework for approximating the optimal size of a warehouse container

That outline illustrates that the paper is organized by research ideas, not by researchers

Beware of reviews in which most topic sentences begin with a reference...

Parallel, Informative Headings in Seamus Martin Review

- *Maybe Not a Thousand cuts, but Getting There*
- *Paths to Destruction*
- *Worm and Fly Apoptosomes: Seeking a Role for Cytochrome c*
- *DARK Tales of Reaper, Hid, and Grim: An Apoptosome on a Hair Trigger?*
- *Reaper Sows the Seed of DIAP1 Destruction*
- *Quenching Caspase Activation through IAP-Mediated Polyubiquitination?*

Is it Appropriate for Reviews to Contain Illustrations?

- Yes!
 - Summarize
 - Propose a model
 - Illustrate areas of inquiry or controversy

Diagram removed for copyright reasons.

When Evaluating a Review Paper,

- Ask:
 - What questions are answered?
 - What questions aren't answered?
 - What system has the writer used to organize the review?
 - Is it a good review? Why?

Good Luck!