



Literature Reviews

The purpose of a literature review is two-fold. First it is to set up the history of your research. What has already been done? What has been learned thus far? Secondly, it is to give your audience the reason why you are conducting your research by pointing out what aspects have not been studied yet and how your research is adding to the body of existing research. It is not a book report where you summarize each article. Let your topic drive what research and what you eventually choose to include in your literature review.

Topic Definition

Write a description of your topic as if you were explaining it to your friend.

In column 1, list the key terms you used in that description.

In column 2, list terms that are part of a bigger idea related to it.

In column 3, list terms that are smaller aspects of it.

Key Terms	Broader Terms	Narrower Terms
<i>Minnesota</i>	<i>United States of America</i>	<i>Duluth</i>

What are your terms “really” called?

Subject Headings, Subject Terms, MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)

Term	Subject Heading
<i>knee cap</i>	<i>patella</i>

Search Strategy

Boolean Logic

Combine your searches by either limiting with *and* between your terms, which limits the results to only those that have both search terms or *or*, which expands your search to those articles that have either one of the search terms.

Example – How many animals have fur and webbed feet? How many animals have fur or webbed feet?

Combine your terms in various combinations.

Organize Results

Compile the resources you have found into categories.

Example – General Information, Background History, Information on Aspect 1 of Topic, Information on Aspect 2 of Topic, Summary of Research Methods, Support for Hypothesis 1, Support for Hypothesis 2, Support for Conclusion, etc.

List the categories that you want in your literature review in the first column and the resources' basic information that fit in each category in the second column.

Category	Resources

(Do some categories need more information?!?)

How do you evaluate sources?

Author – Who is the source of the information?

- Credibility
- Authority
- Reliability
- Validity

Content – How is this written?

- Bias
- Intent
- Currency
- Vagueness
- Specificity

Basis of Information - What are the sources THEY used?

- Theory
- Research
- Opinion
- Advice

How do you use information ethically?

What is plagiarism?

From Student Handbook, “Academic dishonesty is defined as follows: Misrepresentation of the work of others as one’s own; dishonesty in testing; violating authorized guidelines established by instructors for individual assignments; sabotaging or damaging the work of others; or engaging in dishonesty in other academic work. ”

How can you avoid plagiarizing?

- Citing sources
- In-text citations
 - Paraphrasing and Summarizing – ideas from somewhere else put in your own words, perhaps condensed and/or simplified
 - Quoting – words from someone else
- Bibliography – has all sources consulted for paper
- Works Cited or References – has only sources used in paper

Parenthetical Documentation or In-text Citations

It sounds painful, but it doesn't have to be! Basically parenthetical documentation or in-text citations means that you are telling the reader where you got any and all information that did not come from inside your own head. This is more obvious when you are directly quoting from a source, but it is also needed when you have summarized or paraphrased from a source and even if you got an idea from somewhere else.

So how do you do it? As the names imply, you are going to put the information about the source in parentheses in the text of your paper as opposed to a footnote where the source information is at the bottom of the page or an endnote where it goes at the end of your paper. There are slight differences on what is included from the source depending on which style you are using.

Research Log

Keeping track of the search terms and resources you have used to find information is essential especially in a long project such as for a graduate project. Keep it simple so it will be sustainable.

A sample chart is included below, but feel free to tailor it to what suits your information needs.

Date	Search terms used	Databases searched	What did I find?	Notes (ideas to try next, hints)