

Topic: What topic do you want to cover in your review?

“The topic must at least be:

(i) interesting to you (ideally, you should have come across a series of recent papers related to your line of work that call for a critical summary),

(ii) an important aspect of the field (so that many readers will be interested in the review and there will be enough material to write it), and

(iii) a well-defined issue (otherwise you could potentially include thousands of publications, which would make the review unhelpful)” -- Pautasso

Target audience: Who do want to read your review paper? Who is it for?

Target Journal: What journal do you want to target the review paper to? (Think back to the topic/field and target audience. If unsolicited, make sure your target journal accepts unsolicited review articles.)

Secondary Journals: Other secondary journal options where your paper might also fit.

Review Article Type: What type of review are you writing? A relatively short, focused, review, such as a Mini-Review? Or a full comprehensive review? You can also list the Review Article type from the target journal’s article types and link to Author Guidelines.

‘A mini-review is not necessarily a minor review: it may well attract more attention from busy readers, although it will inevitably simplify some issues and leave out some relevant material due to space limitations. A full review will have the advantage of more freedom to cover in detail the complexities of a particular scientific development, but may then be left in the pile of the very important papers “to be read” by readers with little time to spare for major monographs.’ -- Pautasso

Review Outline

“Literature reviews are in great demand in most scientific fields. Their need stems from the ever-increasing output of scientific publications ... Although recognition for scientists mainly comes from primary research, timely literature reviews can lead to new synthetic insights and are often widely read.” -- Pautasso

Working Title: Give your review paper a working title (I use Working Title because it will likely change many times, especially, if you are just in an early planning phase).

Authors: List of authors

Author contributions (if applicable): Many journals now require author contributions be listed, so list the main contributions of each author, or alternatively, list their expected contributions if planning your research.

“With reviews, the usual subdivision of research papers into introduction, methods, results, and discussion does not work or is rarely used. However, a general introduction of the context

and, toward the end, a recapitulation of the main points covered and take-home messages make sense also in the case of reviews” -- Pautasso

Introduction

Context: Introduce the general context and topic of the review.

Purpose/Objective (What?): What is the overarching purpose or main objective of the review? What is the main topic/problem you want to illuminate with your review (think back to your Topic above)?

Justification (Why?): Justify your Purpose/Objective. Why is the Topic important? What gaps in knowledge do your review bridge? What insights will your review offer (or hope to offer)? Also, think back to your target audience - Why should they read your review?

Other Sections (this is more freeform than a standard research article)

Here you can start to organize the main sections and subsections of your paper. For each section give a brief description of its purpose and what topic(s) it will cover. Consider the following:

Primary results and conclusions: What are the primary results reported in this area and what conclusions did they lead to? How do they relate back to your Purpose/Objective and Justification?

Figures/Tables: What Figures and Tables do you want to include? Where will the data for Figures/Tables come from? Determine if you will generate figures yourself or directly reproduce from a source article (make sure you can get Copyright permission when reproducing directly from a publication).

Conclusions/Summary

Main Points/Take-home message: Recapitulate the main points covered in your review and highlight any final “take-home” message(s) for the readers.

5. References

1. Pautasso, M. (2013). Ten Simple Rules for Writing a Literature Review. *PLoS Computational Biology*, 9(7), 7–10. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1003149>
2. Whitesides, G. M. (2004). Whitesides’ Group: Writing a paper. *Advanced Materials*, 16(15 SPEC. ISS.), 1375–1377. <https://doi.org/10.1002/adma.200400767>