

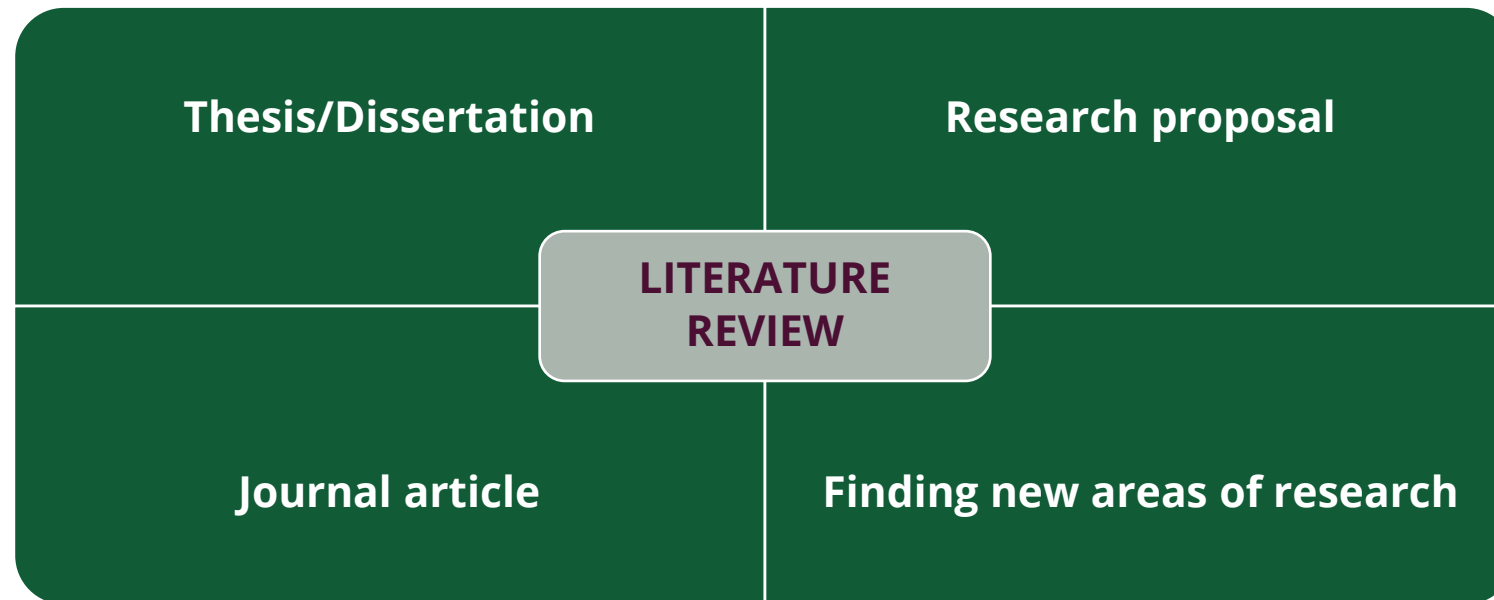
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# **Step by Step Guide to Writing a Literature Review**

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# Literature Review



Literature review aids in:

- Deciding if proposed research question is required
- Narrow down and focus on a particular research goal
- Develop hypotheses for further studies

**Literature Review**



**Summarize**

**Synthesize**

**Critique**

**Compare**

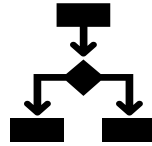
# Steps involved in Literature Review



Search for relevant literature



Check & evaluate the chosen literature



Identify themes, concepts, theories, debates, key questions, gaps in literature



Outline the structure of the literature review



Write the literature review

Plan

Read and Research

Analyze

Draft

Revise

# POLL

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**Only journal articles should be searched for literature review.**

Yes

No

# Search for relevant literature

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- Read journal articles, books, government websites, conference proceedings.
- Refer library subject guides in your field of study to find the key databases and additional resources; consult the librarian.
- Start with a general idea on the topic, Refine the research problem – start with a feasible focus [e.g., Gastric cancer (broad area of research), Role of microbes in gastric cancer (refining the research problem)]; get help from a senior researcher or the research supervisor.
- Use the right keywords for search (e.g., gastric cancer, microbes, gut microbiome).
- Use boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT).
- Read abstracts, check bibliography for related papers and make note of the subject headings that relate to the theme of interest.
- Note down all the questions, ideas and hypothesis that come to your mind as you read.
- Save your references.

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**It is important to cite all the references collected and write everything that is covered on the chosen topic.**

Yes

No

# Evaluate and select literature

- Read papers that have broad focus & read widely, understand the major concepts, look for patterns (Ex: Group A researchers think Drug X has excellent efficacy while Group B think that combining Drug X with Drug Y has better efficacy).
- Ask yourself questions about important theories proposed, methods, results & conclusions of various papers under this field of study, focus on significant insights & arguments of each research, how does each paper fit into the bigger picture – strengths & weaknesses of the studies, quality of the published paper/journal/author output.
- It can be confusing while reading hundreds of papers to define your research problem! 😊
- As you read you narrow down on your problem, and as you focus on your problem you will notice the papers you can ignore!
- Read carefully, analyze the literature, take notes & organize (index cards or tables in a Word document).
- Talk to the experienced researchers and your research supervisor and get their feedback.



# Filling the gaps

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- What is known about the topic under consideration?
- What are the main themes and variables/parameters studied and have any associations been studied among them?
- What are the theories that have been established? Are there any contradictory theories?
- What are the voids present in the current understanding in this topic and among the parameters studied?
- Are there any limitations or inconclusive results in previous studies?
- Are there any theories that need to be tested further?
- What evidence needs to be provided to deepen the understanding of this topic?
- Should new methods be incorporated into the study?
- How will the research problem at hand be expected to add value to existing knowledge?

# POLL

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Even if it is slightly out of scope, giving more information in my literature review is better to aid the reader's understanding.

Yes

No

# Outline and organize the literature review



Chronological

- **Summarize individual articles**

Providing details on the procedures used in other reports is not necessary. Emphasize on the important results, methodological issues, major conclusions.



Thematic

- **Describe agreement/disagreement**



Methodological

- **Interpret & discuss the reviewed literature in a logical manner**



Theoretical

# Format of the review

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## Introduction:

- Introduce the topic
- Explain why the topic is important, establish the purpose
- Focus on the content and set the boundaries/scope, explain the structure of the review
- Mention the aim of the review (for journal article)

## Body:

- Analyze the literature reviewed
- Discuss the key concepts, discuss & evaluate the reports – compare & contrast the literature studied, highlight high quality studies
- Systematically discuss the existing literature
- Summarize and relate to your research problem
- Write as many sections as needed with a logical flow

## Conclusion:

- Summarize the key findings and lay emphasis on the most relevant points
- Relate the inference to the need for the current research topic
- Reiterate what these mean for the research design
- If relevant, state the original study that you will build up on for your research

# Other tips

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## **AVOID!**

- Unprofessional/unscientific language
- Plagiarism
- Lack of Fluency and Cohesiveness
- Too few/outdated references

## **NOTE:**

- Develop scientific presentation skills
- Use transitions to develop fluency
- Cite recent and relevant references (use seminal references as needed)
- Use a citation management tool like RefWorks or EndNote
- Refer literature reviews in completed thesis/dissertations from your research group
- Be accurate, systematic, thorough, integrative, and complete in writing your review

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