



LITERATURE REVIEW

HOW TO WRITE ONE

BREAKING IT DOWN

A literature review is an evaluative report of information found in the literature related to an area of study.

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

The goal of a literature review is to lead up to the study itself by presenting what other research shows regarding the topic.

In Social Sciences particularly, research conclusions are never strong in themselves. The strength of data comes with replication of the same or similar results across various research studies.

Having said that, the literature review seeks to find research and literature related to the topic of interest.

TIP #1

A source can also be your ticket to finding other sources! Take a look at the author's reference list to find more useful and credible sources!

TIP #2

While reading the research, take note of the style of writing- you will want to mimic this style when writing your own literature review.



DEFINING ITS USES

WHAT DOES IT DO?

THE DO'S AND THE
DON'TS

WHAT DOES IT DO?

A literature review differs in a few ways from the way general research papers are approached.

A literature review does...

- Seeks to explore a relationship between different variables or factors
- Uses patterns in the research to show the above relationship
- Synthesizes the body of existing research
- Remains objective in style

A literature review does not...

- Seek to prove an argument for one position or another
- Include description or narrative detail
- Summarize sources one at a time; give lengthy descriptions or explanations of any one study

It is interesting to see that many of the approaches we are taught to take in composition classes do not apply to a literature review. In many ways this makes the approach to the literature review almost counter-intuitive for many students. It is a very different approach to the writing.

What Do I Do?

Know your research question.

This serves as sort of a thesis statement. A research question is that specific question that guides your writing and research.

STEP 01

You should have, in your mind, a relationship of variables that you will be supporting.

Ex. How does objectification of woman in music videos affect the self-esteem of women?

The Strategy

Have a strategy for approaching the literature. Become familiar with the sections that are usually in journal articles, and the order in which the information is presented so that you get used to reading these kinds of documents.

STEP 02

Notice the two "themes" or "variables" stated. The rest of the paper will focus on showing the relationship between those variables. .

One suggestion is to skim the first part of the article and spend most of your time understanding the conclusion. Focus on the conclusion the researcher has drawn to help support your point!

Synthesize, don't summarize!

Avoid summarizing each of your sources! Summarizing each source becomes more like an annotated bibliography than a literature review.

STEP 03

To avoid summarizing, use the "by point, not source" method. Identify different points in your topic and research question and then figure out which sources can support that point.