

Tips on Conducting a Literature Review

I. Overview

A literature review consists of examining peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, and other sources such as dissertations, conference papers and reports that are relevant to the specific topic of interest. The purpose of the literature review is to:

1. Describe the research that has been conducted on the specific topic
2. Summarize the knowledge about the specific topic
3. Critically evaluate each source reviewed

II. General Tips for Conducting a Literature Review

1. Search for a variety of scholarly sources that relate to your specific topic.
 - a. At first, you may need to search broadly and find articles loosely related to your topic.
 - b. Generate a large list and then select the most relevant information from the sources you've reviewed. Choose articles that directly relate to your specific topic and make a significant contribution to the understanding of the topic.
 - c. Here's a resource to help examine if your sources are credible and useful:
 - i. <http://libguides.csuchico.edu/content.php?pid=413921&sid=3390370>
2. Critically review the sources/articles selected and note major findings, strengths and limitations.
 - a. It can be helpful to list out the most relevant sources, followed by bullets briefly listing the major findings, strengths and limitations of each source.
3. Develop an outline and organize your information in a way that makes the most sense. Then begin writing the literature review, using the outline as a guide. The sections of your literature review may vary, but generally follow this format.

*Note: Page length ranges are suggested guidelines and may vary depending on the topic and/or type of literature review.

 - a. **Introduction** – ½ - 1 page in length
 - i. Clearly state the purpose of the literature review. The introduction may also include select relevant statistics and brief background information on the broader issue/topic.
 - b. **Background on the issue and/or program** – ½ - 2 pages in length
 - i. Provide relevant statistics and background information to give the reader sufficient context to understand the literature review.
 - c. **Critical review and analysis of the literature** – 3-5+ pages in length
 - i. This section contains your review and analysis of the literature. This section is usually organized by topics or themes that emerged while reviewing your research sources. You

may decide to use sub-titles to guide the reader through the various topics and/or themes of your literature review.

- d. **Conclusion** – ½ -1 page in length
 - i. Summarize the purpose of the review, major findings, and strengths and limitations of the literature reviewed. This section may also describe gaps in research and detail how the literature review will be used.
- e. **References** - varies
 - i. See citation section below.

III. Citation

A citation documents where you came in contact with a certain idea. If you read an article or other scholarly source and want to include the idea into your literature review, you must document where this idea came from to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, ideas and/or material without properly documenting where you came in contact with their work.

When you use an idea from an article or scholarly source in the body of your text you cite the work by noting it in the text. This is done with either a footnote or in parentheses, depending on the citation style you are using. At the end of your paper you also generate a list of references, following your chosen citation style. It is acceptable to quote or paraphrase from sources you have explored while researching a specific topic, as long as the text is quoted and cited appropriately.

Choose one citation style and use this style consistently throughout your literature review. Most writing assignments in the social sciences, particularly social work, are cited using The American Psychological Association (APA) method. Below is a resource on how to correctly develop reference lists and in-text citations following common citation styles.

1. https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20110928111055_949.pdf
2. www.apastyle.org

IV. Additional Resources and Examples

1. The Instructions Document on how to submit on the Upstream Portfolio contains resources and examples of literature review. Follow the link below, and scroll to page 9 to find links to these resources: <http://www.upstreaminvestments.org/documents/Instructions.pdf>



References

Driscoll, D. (2013, October 26). Social Work Literature Review Guidelines. *20WL Purdue University Online Writing Lab*. Retrieved January 6, 2015, from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/666/01/>

Korber, I. (2014, May 7). The CRAAP Test. *CSH, Chico Research Station: A guide with information on how to write a literature review*. Retrieved January, 6, 2015, from <http://libguides.csuchico.edu/content.php?pid=413921&sid=3390370>

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