



Literature Review

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 grandma or child.

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? You can find out by looking at the subject headings or keywords that are given to articles you have found on your topic.

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

Term	Subject Heading
<i>Movie</i>	<i>motion pictures</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 people have brown hair and blue eyes? How many people have brown hair or blue eyes?

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	Resource					
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(Do some categories need more information?!?)