

**Conducting a Literature Review: Article Review Template**

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**What is a Literature Review?**

A literature review is a written summary of research articles, scholarly books, and other reliable sources of information (e.g., government documents) that describes our past and current state of knowledge on a topic. A literature review helps a researcher understand what has been accomplished in a particular field of inquiry; helps identify gaps and weaknesses within our current understanding of that topic; and can assist a researcher in refining their research questions based on what we already know and do not. A literature review also informs readers of the current state of our knowledge and how a research project fits within that field (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

It is important to note that a literature review is more than just a description of materials available (e.g., published journal articles); it serves to provide a critical appraisal of our current understanding. For instance, a literature review can identify controversies within a field of research, identify current limitations (e.g., lack of high-quality studies or methodological limitations), identify knowledge gaps, and help researchers and readers formulate new research questions for further study. In summary, a literature review serves to focus the purpose of a study by establishing our current understanding of a topic; identifying strengths, weaknesses, and trends within the field; and articulating how your research fits within and will complement, augment, or add to our current state of knowledge.

**Tips for Conducting a Literature Review**

***Before starting a literature review, you may ask yourself the following questions*:**

1. What is the specific problem, thesis, or research question I am interested in studying? This will guide your search for relevant literature.
2. How will this literature review help me with my study (e.g., provide an overview of our current knowledge, gain perspective on common methodologies used in this field of research, or identify central theories or frameworks used within this field of study)?
3. What types of materials do I need to review (e.g., journal articles, books, government documents) and how will I find and access these materials (e.g., consult a librarian, search relevant databases)?
4. What are some keywords or phrases that will help focus my search?

***While conducting your review, you should ask yourself*:**

1. Have I critically analyzed the literature to identify contrasting findings or findings that may be contrary to my thesis or perspective?
2. Have I identified any gaps within our understanding?
3. Have I critically appraised the strengths and weaknesses (e.g., methods used) of the materials I have reviewed?
4. Based on my review, does my initial research question need to be refined?

***While analyzing individual sources (e.g., a research article or book chapter) you should consider and identify the following*:**

1. Who are the authors (i.e., are they a respected expert in the field?)?
2. When was the source published (i.e., is it still relevant?)?
3. Have the authors identified a research problem?
4. Have the authors articulated their research question(s) or objective(s)?
5. Under what circumstances did this study take place and accordingly, are the findings relevant to my study’s context? (For instance, if you are studying student motivation in a first-year undergraduate class, the findings from a study that looked at student motivation in elementary students may be of limited value)
6. What methodology and methods were used and what are the strengths and limitations of these?
7. What theoretical frameworks were used and how do they fit with your intended research?
8. How does this source add to our knowledge (e.g., what are the key findings and conclusions?)?
9. How do the finding and conclusion fit within the larger body of the literature (i.e., do they align with the findings of other similar studies)?
10. How do the findings and conclusions relate to my intended research questions?

**References**

Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, T. C. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and*

*evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.

**Article Review Template**

This article review template can be used to help you summarize key findings, methodologies, and gaps in the literature while assessing the quality and credibility of the sources (e.g., focusing on factors like methodology, sample size, and peer review status) you include in your literature review. Feel free to adapt this template to fit your specific needs or preferences.

**Step 1: Article Information**

*Source Type (e.g., peer-reviewed journal article, book chapter):*

*Title:*

*Author(s):*

*Publication Year:*

*DOI/URL:*

**Step 2: Summary of the Article**

*Objective*: Briefly state the main objective(s) or research question(s) of the article.

*Methods*: Summarize the methodology used in the research (e.g., study design, data collection methods, sample size).

*Key Findings***:** Highlight the main results and conclusions drawn by the authors.

**Step 3: Critical Analysis**

*Strengths***:** Identify the strengths of the article (e.g., robust methodology, comprehensive literature review, significant findings).

*Weaknesses***:** Discuss any limitations or weaknesses (e.g., small sample size, potential biases, lack of generalizability).

*Relevance***:** Explain how this article contributes to the field. Is it groundbreaking, does it fill a gap, or does it support existing theories?

*Literature Context***:** Compare the findings of this article with other relevant studies. That is, how does it align with or challenge existing literature and knowledge?

*Implications for Practice***:** Discuss any practical implications of the findings. For example, how might they influence practice or policy in the field?

*Future Research Directions***:** Suggest areas for further research that could build on the findings of this article.

**Step 4: Personal Reflection**

*Insights Gained*: Reflect on what you learned from this article and how it impacts your understanding of the topic.

*Questions Raised*: List any questions or thoughts that arose while reading the article.