

About the Literature Review

The Review of Literature For Research by (Curtis, Anthony 2011) found at www.uncp.edu sets out to explain the literature review and its place in the research. According to him;

- “ Literature means writings
- A body of literature refers to all the published writings in a particular style on a particular subject.
- In research, a body of literature is a collection of published information and data relevant to a research question.
- The research question. Often referred to as the research problem, the research question provides the context for the research study and reveals what the researcher is trying to answer.
- The literature review. A review of the literature is an essential part of your academic research project. The review is a careful examination of a body of literature pointing toward the answer to your research question.
- Literature reviewed typically includes scholarly journals, scholarly books, authoritative databases and primary sources. Sometimes it includes newspapers, magazines, other books, films, and audio and video tapes, and other secondary sources.
- **Why do it?** The purpose of the literature review remains the same regardless of the research method you use. It tests your research question against what already is known about your subject.
- All good research and writing is guided by a review of the relevant literature.
- The Literature Review allows you to establish the relevance of your research and to search for these answers:
 - What is known about my subject?
 - What is the chronology of the development of knowledge about my subject?

- Are there any gaps in knowledge of my subject? Which openings for research have been identified by other researchers? How do I intend to bridge the gaps?
- Is there a consensus on relevant issues? Or is there significant debate on issues? What are the various positions?
- What is the most fruitful direction I can see for my research as a result of my literature review? What directions are indicated by the work of other researchers?
- Your literature review will have two components:
 - A search through the literature
 - The writing of the review

The solution? Have your research question written down and at hand when you arrive at the computer to search databases or a library catalog. Prepare in advance a plan and a preset time limit.

1. **The search is the first step.** Your search could start from a general source, such as a book, and work its way from those references to the specific topic you want. Or, you could start with a specific source, such as a research paper, and work from that author's references. There isn't a single best approach.
2. **Take thorough notes.** Be sure to write copious notes on everything as you proceed through your research. It's very frustrating when you can't find a reference found earlier that now you want to read in full.
3. It's not hard to open up a blank text document in WordPad (Windows) or TextEdit (Macintosh) to keep a running set of notes during a computer search session. Just jump back and forth between the Web browser screen and the notepad screen.
4. **Using resources wisely.** Practice makes perfect. Learn how and then use the available computer resources properly and efficiently. Log onto the Internet frequently. Visit your research resources regularly. Play with the discipline resources. Enter the databases. Scope out the reference desk materials.

5. **Identify publications which print abstracts of articles and books in your subject area.** Look for references to papers from which you can identify the most useful journals. Identify those authors who seem to be important in your subject area. Identify keywords in your area of interest to help when you need to narrow and refine database searches. Read online library catalogs to find available holdings. Be sure to write copious notes on everything.
6. **Writing the lit review.** One draft won't cut it. Plan from the outset to write and rewrite. Naturally, you will crave a sense of forward momentum, so don't get bogged down. Don't restrict yourself to writing the review in a linear fashion from start to finish. If one area of the writing is proving difficult, jump to another part.
7. **Edit and rewrite.** Your goal is to communicate effectively and efficiently the answer you found to your research question in the literature. Edit your work so it is clear and concise. If you will be writing an abstract and introduction, leave them for the last.
8. Communicating ideas is the objective of your writing, so make it clear, concise and consistent. Big words and technical terms are not clear to everyone. They make it hard for all readers to understand your writing. Consider their use very carefully and substitute a 50-cent word for a \$5 word wherever possible.
9. Style and writing guides are worth browsing if you are unsure how to approach writing. Always re-read what you have written. Get someone else to read it. Read it aloud to see how it sounds to your ear. **Then revise and rewrite.**

The Literature review should be as in essay format - well planned and well organized.

Writing the conclusion. Throughout your written review, you should communicate your new knowledge by combining the research question you asked with the literature you reviewed. End your writing with a conclusion that wraps up what you learned in the literature review process.”