

Literature Review

General Guidelines to Writing a Literature Review

1. Introduce the literature review by pointing out the major research topic that will be discussed
2. Identify the broad problem area but don't be too global (for example, discussing the history of education when the topic is on specific instructional strategy)
3. Discuss the general importance of your topic for those in your field
4. Don't attempt to cover everything written on your topic
5. You will need to pick out the research most relevant to the topic you are studying
6. You will use the studies in your literature review as "evidence" that your research question is an important one
7. It is important to cover research relevant to all the variables being studied.
8. Research that explains the relationship between these variables is a top priority.
9. You will need to plan how you will structure your literature review and write from this plan.

Organizing Your Literature Review

- Topical Order—organize by main topics or issues; emphasize the relationship of the issues to the main "problem"
- Chronological Order—organize the literature by the dates the research was published
- Problem-Cause-Solution Order—Organize the review so that it moves from the problem to the solution
- General-to-Specific Order—(Also called the funnel approach) Examine broad-based research first and then focus on specific studies that relate to the topic
- Specific-to-General Order—Try to make discuss specific research studies so conclusions can be drawn

Common Errors Made in Lit Reviews

- Review isn't logically organized
- Review isn't focused on most important facets of the study
- Review doesn't relate literature to the study
- Too few references or outdated references cited
- Review isn't written in author's own words
- Review reads like a series of disjointed summaries
- Review doesn't argue a point
- Recent references are omitted

Plagiarism includes (Galvan 89):

1. Using another writer's words without proper citation
2. Using another writer's ideas without proper citation
3. Citing a source but reproducing the exact word without quotation marks
4. Borrowing the structure of another author's phrases/sentences without giving the source
5. Borrowing all or part of another student's paper
6. Using paper-writing service or having a friend write the paper

Step-by-step guide of writing the Literature Review

Step 1: Review APA guidelines

Step 2: Decide on a topic

Step 3: Identify the literature that you will review

Step 4: Analyze the literature

Step 5: Summarize the literature in table or concept map format

Step 6: Synthesize the literature prior to writing your review

Step 7: Writing the review (Galvan, 2006: 81-90)

Step 8: Developing a coherent essay

Ref: Galvan, J. (2006). *Writing literature reviews: a guide for students of the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing.