



Writing a Literature Review

Introduction

During your time at university it is likely that you will need to write a literature review on one or more occasions. Types of literature review vary across subject areas and may be written as an individual assignment or as part of a dissertation.

This guide will outline how to write a literature review as an individual assignment.

What is a Literature Review?

The aim of a literature review is to explore and discuss key published material relating to a specific topic area within your wider subject area.

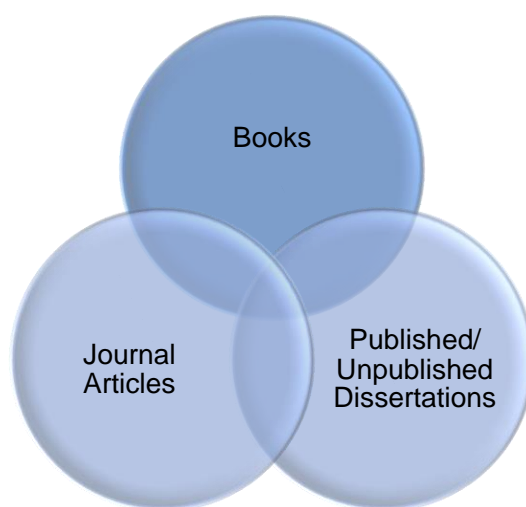
In your literature review you will normally be expected to:

- Identify and group together common issues/themes/areas of discussion
- Identify and group together similar studies
- Compare, contrast and evaluate research/themes/issues
- Identify how research/themes/issues have developed over time as well as the current state of research
- Identify gaps in research and areas for further study

Getting started

Once you are clear on what specific topic/issue your literature review will cover, you should start by searching for relevant reading material. Contact your Academic Liaison Librarian (<http://lrweb.beds.ac.uk/contact/all>) for guidance on locating sources relevant to your specific topic/issue.

You should aim to use a variety of different types of sources, which can include, but is not limited to:



Structure

A literature review will generally be structured with an **introduction**, **main body**, and **conclusion**. You may need to use headings and sub headings for longer literature reviews - check your assignment brief or ask your tutor for guidance.

Below is an overview of what should be included in each section. This is a general overview and you should always follow specific guidance given in your **assignment brief**.

Introduction

- Outline the wider context of your literature review – where/how does your topic or issue fit in to the wider subject area
- What are you going to look at? The focus of your research question (this does not have to be written as a question).
-
- Provide a rationale – i.e. reason and aims – for reviewing the literature on the specific topic. Why is this topic important? Reflection from practice can be used here. Make links to your wider subject area.
- Outline the methodology of your literature review – sources, areas to be discussed, databases, search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Main Body

- Write the review of the literature and form the discussion of the literature review
- Synthesise (=draw together/combine) common themes, issues, propositions sub-headings can be used for this section.
- Analyse and evaluate the themes, issues, propositions (= reoccurring suggestions, conclusions, opinions) found in the literature.
- Compare and contrast themes, issues, propositions, research outcomes
- ✓ **Language tip:** use **linking words** to help with **signposting**

Conclusion

- Conclude how your literature review has met the aims outlined in your introduction
- Summarise and synthesise the main issues/themes related to your topic area as identified in the literature
- Identify limitations of the literature and suggest areas of further study
- Outline implications and significance of the identified themes/issues for your field of study. How can these be applied to your practice?

What to avoid when writing a literature review:

- Listing individual research/literature without **discussing, analysing** and **evaluating** each piece of literature
- Discussing each individual piece of research/literature separately rather than in context – you should **draw together** research and literature based on common **themes/issues** and/or type of study
- Describing what is being said in the literature rather than analysing and evaluating - you should apply and demonstrate **critical analysis** and **evaluation** throughout your literature review

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit:

lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub

