



Writing Centre

Literature Review Template

Definition: A literature review is an objective, critical summary of published research literature relevant to a topic under consideration for research. Its purpose is to create familiarity with current thinking and research on a particular topic, and may justify future research into a previously overlooked or understudied area.

A typical literature review consists of the following components:

1. Introduction:

- A concise **definition of a topic** under consideration (this may be a descriptive or argumentative thesis, or proposal), as well as the **scope** of the related literature being investigated. (Example: If the topic under consideration is ‘women’s wartime diaries’, the scope of the review may be limited to published or unpublished works, works in English, works from a particular location, time period, or conflict, etc.)
- The introduction should also note intentional **exclusions**. (Example: “*This review will not explore the diaries of adolescent girls.*”)
- Another purpose of the introduction is to state the **general findings** of the review (what do *most* of the sources conclude), and comment on the **availability** of sources in the subject area.

2. Main Body:

- There are many ways to organize the evaluation of the sources. **Chronological and thematic approaches** are each useful examples.
- Each work should be critically summarized and evaluated for its **premise, methodology, and conclusion**. It is as important to address inconsistencies, omissions, and errors, as it is to identify accuracy, depth, and relevance.
- Use logical connections and **transitions** to connect sources.

3. Conclusion

- The conclusion **summarizes the key findings** of the review in general terms. Notable commonalities between works, whether favourable or not, may be included here.
- This section is the reviewer’s opportunity to **justify a research proposal**. Therefore, the idea should be clearly re-stated and supported according to the findings of the review.

4. References

- As well as accurate in-text citations, a literature review must contain **complete and correct citations for every source**.