

Where to Find Help on Campus

Consultants at the **Hamline University Writing Center**, located in the basement of Bush Library, are eager to help you with all stages of your writing. We will work with you whether you have just received an assignment and have no idea how to begin or you have a finished draft and want help with revisions.

You can make appointments online at WC Online. Simply follow the instructions at:

<http://rich37.com/hamline>

We look forward to seeing you!



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Literature Reviews



Literature Reviews

A literature review is, as the name suggests, a paper written to review the literature in a field of study. You may be asked to write a literature review as part of a larger work, perhaps a thesis or dissertation, or as a stand-alone project.

In any case, your purpose in the review is to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of your field of study and an understanding of how your research fits into the larger picture.

A literature review is *not* the same as an **annotated bibliography**. The latter is a listing of sources, each with a paragraph or more of summary or analysis.

A literature review is written as an academic paper, with an introduction, body, and conclusion. It may form the first part of a larger work, but it still must cohere as a complete essay.

How to Begin

First you must find the sources that you will review. You may want to start by casting a wide net, identifying any books or articles that relate to your topic, even if they do not directly answer your research question. Doing so will give you a broader view of your field of study, which you can then communicate in your review.

Examine your sources critically. Why were they written? What do they contribute to the discussion? Which controversies in the field do they address? What issues do they fail to address?

Organize your notes in a way that makes sense and that will allow you to demonstrate the connections between these sources and your research question.

Your research has probably led to some questions on your part. Inquiries and suggestions for further study will also be an important part of your review.

Writing Your Review

The Introduction

Begin by defining the topic carefully, outlining its scope and limits.

Explain the criteria by which you will review the literature, and the organization of your review.

Summarize what has been published, with an eye to different theories, methods, evidence, and conclusions. Mention new areas of interest.

Depending on the extent of your research, your introduction may comprise more than one paragraph.

The Main Body

Organize your research studies into some kind of identifiable pattern, such as:

- Specific purpose
- Chronology
- Qualitative versus quantitative methods
- Conclusions drawn

Summarize articles according to their comparative importance. The more important a source, the more time you should spend on it in your essay.

Focus on comparisons and analysis throughout. Remember to relate your findings to your own inquiry. This is a necessary part of a literature review. Readers want to be reminded of every source's relevance to the wider picture and to your particular research.

Keep in mind the rules of good writing: strong sentences, cohesive paragraphs with clear topic sentences, and logical transitions from one paragraph to the next.

The Conclusion

Summarize significant articles and studies, maintaining the focus you outlined in the introduction.

Point out gaps in research, inconsistencies in findings, and areas for further study.

Finally, clarify some relationship between the central topic of the literature review and a larger discipline, profession, or endeavor.

Accessing More Information

- University of Wisconsin Writing Center: www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook
- The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

Acknowledgments

Information for this brochure was adapted from:

“Review of Literature.” The Writing Center @ University of Wisconsin – Madison. 27 Jan. 2009. <www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>.

“Social Work Literature Review Guidelines.” Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University. 27 Jan. 2009. <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/666/01>>.