



International University of Interfaith Morality

Literature Review

What is a literature review?

The aim of a literature review is to show that you have read and have a good grasp of the main published work concerning a particular topic or question in your field. This work may be in any format, including online sources. It may be a separate assignment, or one of the introductory sections of a report, dissertation or thesis. In the latter cases in particular, the review will be guided by your research objective or by the issue or thesis you are arguing and will provide the framework for your further work.

It is very important to note that your review should not be simply a description of what others have published in the form of a set of summaries, but should take the form of a critical discussion, showing insight and an awareness of differing arguments, theories and approaches. It should be a synthesis and analysis of the relevant published work, linked at all times to your own purpose and rationale.

Why write a literature review?

1. To discover what has been written about a topic already
2. To determine what each source contributes to the topic
3. To understand the relationship between the various contributions, identify and (if possible) resolve contradictions, and determine gaps or unanswered questions
4. To avoid unnecessary duplication
5. To relate your findings to previous knowledge and suggest further research

A good literature review, therefore, is critical of what has been written, identifies areas of controversy, raises questions and identifies areas which need further research.

What is the Structure of the literature review?

1. **Introduction** The introduction should identify your topic, some discussion of the significance of that topic and a thesis statement that outlines what conclusion you will draw from your analysis and synthesis of the literature. If your literature review is part of a larger work, explain the importance of the review to your research question.
2. **Body** In the body, discuss and assess the research according to specific organizational principles, rather than addressing each source separately. Most, if not all, paragraphs should discuss more than one source. Avoid addressing your sources alphabetically as this does not assist in developing the themes or key issues central to your review.

According to Caulley (1992) of La Trobe University, the literature review should:

- compare and contrast different authors' views on an issue
- group authors who draw similar conclusions
- criticize aspects of methodology
- note areas in which authors are in disagreement
- highlight exemplary studies
- highlight gaps in research
- show how your study relates to previous studies

- show how your study relates to the literature in general
- conclude by summarizing what the literature says

The overall structure of your review will depend largely on your own thesis or research area. What you will need to do is to group together and compare and contrast the varying opinions of different writers on certain topics. What you must not do is just describe what one writer says, and then go on to give a general overview of another writer, and then another, and so on. Your structure should be dictated instead by topic areas, controversial issues or by questions to which there are varying approaches and theories. Within each of these sections, you would then discuss what the different literature argues, remembering to link this to your own purpose.

3. **Conclusion** The conclusion should provide a summary of YOUR findings from the literature review. Explain what your analysis of the material leads you to conclude about the overall state of the literature, what it provides and where it is lacking. You can also provide suggestions for future research or explain how your future research will fill the gaps in the existing body of work on that topic.

How to write the review?

You first need to decide what you need to read. In many cases you will be given a booklist or directed towards areas of useful published work. It is important to try and decide on the parameters of your research. What exactly are your objectives and what do you need to find out? In your review, are you looking at issues of theory, methodology, policy, quantitative research, or what? Before you start reading it may be useful to compile a list of the main areas and questions involved, and then read with the purpose of finding out about or answering these. Unless something comes up which is particularly important, stick to this list, as it is very easy to get sidetracked, particularly on the internet.

A good literature review needs a clear line of argument. You therefore need to use the critical notes and comments you made whilst doing your reading to express an academic opinion. Make sure that:

- You include a clear, short introduction which gives an outline of the review, including the main topics covered and the order of the arguments, with a brief rationale for this.
- There is always a clear link between your own arguments and the evidence uncovered in your reading. Include a short summary at the end of each section. Use quotations if appropriate.
- You always acknowledge opinions which do not agree with your thesis. If you ignore opposing viewpoints, your argument will in fact be weaker.

Your review must be written in a formal, academic style. Keep your writing clear and concise, avoiding colloquialisms and personal language. You should always aim to be objective and respectful of others' opinions; this is not the place for emotive language or strong personal opinions. If you thought something was rubbish, use words such as "inconsistent" or "based on false assumptions"!

And remember at all times to avoid plagiarizing your sources. Always separate your source opinions from your own hypothesis. Making sure you consistently reference the literature you are referring to. When you are doing your reading and making notes, it might be an idea to use different colors to distinguish between your ideas and those of others.

Instruction of this step:

1. Conduct literature review of the topic having been approved in the Step I.
2. Compose in .doc or .docx file type.
3. Add bibliography at the end of the paper.
4. Submit the work with cover page with student's name, ID, and title of the paper. ("Literature Review of ...your thesis title....")