

Literature Reviews & Synthesis Log

ASU Graduate Academic Support Centers

Literature reviews are essential in research papers as well as theses and dissertations. Through the literature review, the writer offers a synthesized discussion of research related to a thesis research question or a paper's topic. A literature review is **designed to do the following:**

- Provide a context for your reader/audience
- Legitimize your idea ---e.g., "there is a reason why I think this is important"--by discussing it in relation to what other scholars have said/studied
- Help you further frame and define the issue, problem, or purpose for your project
- Allow you to make a space to contribute to the conversation, find gaps in the existing research, or add to the general understanding of your topic

A literature review is **NOT** a single paragraph summary of each article you have found (that is an Annotated Bibliography, which serves as preparation for writing a literature review).

A literature review **IS** a **synthesis or blend** of the concepts you found in each source: reviewing the relevance of concepts presented in the sources; evaluating the content; and comparing different sources to show similar schools of thought, to highlight disagreements, to show gaps in research, to show what has been done already, and ultimately to show how your research will fit into the existing research.

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| List at least 3 similarities between your sources. Are there any similar concepts, connections, themes, or ideas? | List at least 3 ways in which your sources differ from each other. Are there opposing ideas or does one source have a completely unique theme that is not found in any of your other sources? | List any concepts/ideas/theories/methodologies from the sources that you find most valuable to your topic. Which source(s) seemed most important to your research question/topic and why? |
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