






Literature reviews should comprise the following elements:





- ✓ An overview of the subject, issue or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of the literature review
- ✓ Division of works under review into categories (e.g. those in support of a particular position, those against, and those offering alternative theses entirely)
- ✓ Explanation of how each work is similar to and how it varies from the others
- ✓ Conclusions as to which pieces are best considered in their argument, are most convincing of their opinions, and make the greatest contribution to the understanding

Layout












Make your literature review have an academic and professional appearance. Here are some points to make the look of your report appealing to the reader

-  **White space:** leave space between sections, especially from the abstract. This gives an uncluttered effect.
-  **Headings/sub-headings:** these help to separate ideas.
-  **Text boxes:** you can use these for quotations or paraphrasing to separate them from the rest of your text. It is also pleasing to the eye.
-  **Graphics:** center your graphics, such as diagrams or tables, to have space around them. Try not to bury graphics in your text.
-  **Pagination:** you can number pages or sections or both, but the important thing to do is to be consistent. The cover page normally is not numbered. The content page and abstract page usually have a separate numbering system to the body of your literature review.

Language focus

-  Create a balance between direct quotation (citation) and paraphrasing. Avoid too much direct quoting. The verb tense chosen depends on your emphasis:
-  When you are citing a specific author's findings, use the past tense: (found, demonstrated);
-  When you are writing about an accepted fact, use the present tense: (demonstrates, finds); and
-  When you are citing several authors or making a general statement, use the present perfect tense: (have shown, have found, little research has been done).

Final Checklist

-  Have I fulfilled the purpose of the literature review?
-  Is it written at a level appropriate to its audience? Are its facts correct?
-  Is all the information included relevant? Are the layout and presentation easy on the eye? Is the language clear, concise and academic?
-  Does the abstract summarise the entire review?
-  Does the introduction adequately introduce the topic?
-  Is the body organised logically?
-  Does the conclusion interpret, analyse and evaluate?
-  Are the recommendations reasonable?
-  Does the table of contents correspond with the actual contents? Are page numbers correct?
-  Have I acknowledged all sources of information through correct referencing?
-  Have I checked spelling, grammar and punctuation. Have I carefully proof-read the final draft?

Excellent Review

Student displays an excellent understanding and exposition of relevant issues in the field. The argument is clearly structured and logically developed and the review has only minor or no obvious weaknesses. Relevant data are clearly presented, figures and tables (if used) are relevant and are part of the overall argument and their sources are acknowledged. The evaluation and synthesis of a wide range of material is excellent and the standard of critical analysis throughout is high. References are correctly cited and conform to the style of an appropriate scientific journal. The text is clearly written in unambiguous, readable English. Overall design and presentation of the literature review is good.

Good Review

Overall the student displays a good understanding and exposition of the relevant issues, but there are notable weaknesses in a few areas. For example, the review may not be well structured, the argument not fully developed or some of the relevant data has been omitted. Figures and tables (if used) are appropriate (but may not integrated into the argument) and there is evidence of further reading. The critical analysis is of an adequate standard. References are correctly cited and conform to the style of an appropriate scientific journal. The text is clearly written in unambiguous, readable English. Overall design and presentation are good.

Pass Review

Overall the student shows an adequate understanding and exposition of relevant issues but there are notable weaknesses in several areas. For example, the argument is reasonably clear but isn't fully developed and there is a limited presentation and explanation of relevant data. Figures and tables are not well presented or are not part of the argument (i.e., they serve a decorative purpose only). Limited amount of relevant reading mostly of secondary sources (reviews, etc.) and the material has been insufficiently evaluated. References are mostly correct and appear in both the text and reference list. Writing is not consistently clear and there is a need for some sentences to be reworded. Overall presentation is adequate.

Below Standard Review

Overall the student shows a poor understanding of the relevant issues and there are major weaknesses throughout the review. The arguments are unclear and the relevant data often lacking. There is poor use of figures and tables and little evidence of relevant reading. The evaluation of material is superficial and the synthesis is poor. There are frequent errors and omissions in the text and the writing style is poor, with many sentences in need of correction. Overall presentation of the review is substandard.