

Conducting Effective Library Research

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What is a Literature Review?

A LITERATURE REVIEW is a survey of everything that has been written about a particular topic, theory, or research question. It may provide the background for larger work, or it may stand on its own. *An effective literature review **analyzes** and **synthesizes** information about key themes or issues.* The library website ¹ is a good place to start finding resources as is the research guide for this class ²

Office Hours
1-3 Thursdays
Tisch 224
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¹ <http://tischlibrary.tufts.edu>

² <http://researchguides.library.tufts.edu/sociology102>

Evaluating sources

For each book or article consider³

Rationale Why did the author or publisher make this information available? Is there obvious and/or extreme bias or prejudice?

Authority What are the author's credentials? Is the publisher of the information source reputable?

Date When was the information published or last updated?

Accuracy Was the information reviewed by editors or subject experts? Is there a description of the research method used? Does the method seem appropriate and well-executed? Do the citations and references support the author's claim? Are the references correctly cited?

Relevance Does the source add something new to your knowledge of the topic? Who is the intended audience?

³ Use this as a starting point. When in doubt, don't be afraid to ask your professor, librarian, and each other about the veracity of sources.

Keywords

Citation/Notes

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Citation/Notes

Search Tip 1

Combine descriptive keywords and “**phrases**”⁴ using:

and to narrow results

or to expand results

() to group together similar concepts

(immigration **OR** diaspora) **AND** (“United States” **OR** U.S)

⁴ Use quotation marks “” around phrases carefully. They are best used with compound phrases/words/full names like “Climate Change”, “Social Media”. “Taylor Swift”.

Search Tip 2

Use the asterisk symbol * to retrieve plurals and variant spellings/endings

child* will return. . .

child

childhood

children

child’s

Search Tip 3

Experiment with *synonyms*⁵ if your search terms aren’t yielding relevant results.

⁵ Try the ‘thesaurus’ in Sociological Abstracts

Search Tip 4

Refine using features that allow you to filter on publication/document type, publication title, year, scholarly/peer-reviewed, discipline, etc.

Search Tip 5

The “*one good article*” strategy.⁶

⁶ If you find one (or two) really relevant article(s), spend some time with its language. Make use of citation information available in databases and the often extensive bibliographies at the end of the paper. Web of Science and Google Scholar are very useful for citation analysis.

Search Tip 6

Save your citations!⁷

⁷ JumboSearch and Google Scholar both have ‘cite’ features. Zotero is also a major time-saver! <https://www.zotero.org/>

Search Tip 7

If the full-text isn’t immediately available, don’t give up! Search article titles in JumboSearch and make use of our interlibrary loan system.