

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A LITERATURE REVIEW?

A literature review is a piece of academic writing demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the academic literature on a specific topic. Literature review is essentially a survey of scholarly sources on a specific topic. It provides an overview of current knowledge, allowing you to identify **relevant theories**, **methods**, and **gaps** in existing research.

CONDUCTING A LITERATURE REVIEW INVOLVES A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS WHICH ARE LISTED BELOW:

- *Include a critical analysis of existing research*
- *It highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of existing research*
- *Allow you to gain a critical understanding of your field.*
- *Gives you the opportunity to think about what has been done before.*
- *Think about the similarities, patterns, trends, and differences across existing research*
- *It enable you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research in your field.*

READING CRITICALLY

In academic writing, it's important to read literature critically to validate the source you are reading. To do this, you need to question the text. Here are a list of some questions you should ask yourself.

- *What were the research aims of the paper or book?*
- *Is the research aim achieved? If so, how did they do it?*
- *Are there any problems with their methodology?*
- *Was it a strong or a weak research model?*
- *What can you take from it?*
- *What needs to be avoided?*
- *What are you doing differently?*

WHAT CRITICAL THINKING CAN MEAN REGARDING LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical thinking in literature reviews means:

- *Understanding research on its own terms.*
- *Understanding research in relation to other arguments.*
- *Critiquing research in relation to what you want to do.*

WRITING CRITICALLY AND INDICATING YOUR OWN POSITION

It is important that you don't just describe other research but you critically evaluate it as part of your discussion. This will also help you to make your own voice and perspective heard. As this can sometimes get lost when you are talking about other people's findings arguments. To do this, consider using a relative expressions which will convey your viewpoint. Here I've listed a few example:

- *The research neglected to consider*
- *The research disregarded*
- *The research overlooked*
- *The research has taken account of*
- *The research has been limited to*
- *The research has overestimated*

It can be helpful to look out for phrases like these in other articles or texts that you read and pay attention to how others write critically about academic research.

ACKNOWLEDGING OTHER VIEWPOINTS

You also need to show that you have considered multiple perspectives both when critiquing the findings of others and your own research, rather than weakening your argument discussion. This will demonstrate that you are able to acknowledge and understand alternative viewpoints. It will also enable your discussion to become more sophisticated. It will prevent you from giving the impression that you think an argument is right or true.

LINKING WORDS

Use linked words and short phrases to help guide the reader through the argument. Here I've listed some ideas:

- *to add more ideas use words like again, furthermore, in addition, moreover*
- *to compare or contrast ideas: use words like alternatively, contrastingly, conversely, whereas*
- *to prove something: use words like evidently, for this reason, because, evidently, inevitably*
- *to show exceptions: use words like however, nevertheless, yet, in spite of*
- *To repeat or refer back to something: use words like, as has been mentioned, noted, as previously discussed.*

- *To show that you will include something later: this will be discussed in detail later.*
- *To emphasise something: use words like definitely, obviously, inevitably, undeniably.*
- *To give an example: for instance, in this case, in particular, notably.*
- *To show the order of things: previously, following this, initially, subsequently, Finally,*