

Literature Review

What a Literature Review is:

A Literature Review is a look at what knowledge already exists on a given topic. In order to get an adequate sense of the topic, you must consult several diverse sources to help determine what information exists, what is missing on the topic, and areas in which scholars disagree. This requires the writer to investigate the different subtopics that exist on the subject and combine them to understand the whole topic.

What a Literature Review is NOT:

When conducting a Literature Review, a writer does not simply summarize each of their sources as in an annotated bibliography. Instead, the literature review should be organized around main ideas and subtopics that come together to explain the larger topic.

A Synthesis Matrix:

The synthesis matrix will ensure you do not talk about each source independently but combine them to firmly support your topic.

Topic: _____

	Source #1	Source #2	Source #3
Main Idea A			
Main Idea B			

- The source columns would include the name of the author or source.
- In the column on the left, you would label your main ideas or subtopics. When reading through your sources, you place in the appropriate column and row information you find on each main idea.
- After completing this synthesis matrix, you will be able to compare and contrast the different information provided by each source. You will also be able to narrow down your thesis and the specific topic you would like to discuss or research.