



## WRITING A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### ***A review of the literature:***

- Focuses on a specific topic – your argument or problem as stated in your thesis
- Compiles the research that has been published on the topic by recognized scholars and researchers
  - Provides background for the problem or puts the problem into historical perspective
- Informs the reader about the current concepts and state of research on the topic and any controversies
- Describes the pros and cons of particular studies and may suggest areas for further research
- Organizes the citations thematically into a narrative that can serve as the introduction to your report or that can be an individual essay

### ***A review of the literature is NOT:***

A *literary* review describing and evaluating a specific book, poem, play, etc.

An exhaustive, alphabetical list of every work consulted in your research, nor a list of references cited

An annotated bibliography listing references and adding a brief notes about the value of each source

Suggestions for further reading

## ONLINE HELP with LITERATURE REVIEWS

<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>

Good explanation and questions for students to ask themselves on selection process from U of Toronto Writing Center

<http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html>

HOW TO...Write a Literature Review from U of California Santa Cruz – short bullet points

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html>

UW-Madison Writing Center – more about organizing and writing the lit review not much on searching and evaluating

[http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature\\_review.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature_review.html)

UNC-Chapel Hill Writing Center – chatty handout explaining the steps, organization and general how to of writing a lit review  
also annotated bib handout:

[http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/annotated\\_bibliographies.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/annotated_bibliographies.html)

[http://www.library.american.edu/Help/tutorials/lit\\_review/index.html](http://www.library.american.edu/Help/tutorials/lit_review/index.html)

American U – What is, and is not, a literature review? With an example lit review of critical thinking (19 pages).

<http://www.languages.ait.ac.th/EL21LIT.HTM#using>

Language Center, Asian Institute of Technology – Research based - 10 Questions the Lit Review should answer; example review – good and bad analyzed

[http://edgenet.edgewood.edu/LSS/writingcenter/articles/lit\\_review.htm](http://edgenet.edgewood.edu/LSS/writingcenter/articles/lit_review.htm)

Edgewood's Writing Center - Step by step guide to writing and refining your literature review

## FINDING REVIEWS OF THE LITERATURE

Most of the specialized databases will have scholarly articles that are either Literature Reviews or have a review of the literature as an introduction to the research.

Keys to finding them are:

ERIC – Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>“Literature Reviews”</i> is a <i>descriptor</i> – search in SU Descriptors (All) and combine with search terms on your topic - Limit to Journal Articles</li> <li>▪ <b>Eric Digests</b> are brief, 3-5 page, full text articles that describes the current state of an issue and provide a bibliography, but does not evaluate the pros and cons of the studies cited.</li> <li>▪ Search for your topic and limit Publication Type to: Information Analysis - ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text</li> </ul>
PsycInfo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Literature Review</i> is a <i>Descriptor</i> – search Descriptors, DE=</li> <li>▪ Publication Type – Review gives you book reviews</li> </ul>
CINAHL (Nursing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Select <i>Systematic Review</i> as a Publication Type and combine with terms for your topic</li> </ul>
Medline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check <i>Review Articles</i> under Refine Search</li> </ul>
Academic Search Premier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limit to Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals and add “literature review” or “review of literature as search terms and combine with your topic</li> <li>▪ Literature Review as a Document Type is not useful</li> <li>▪ Bibliography will give you lists of books on a topic, but not true literature reviews</li> </ul>
Business Source Elite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Same as above for Premier</li> </ul>
CMMC – Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limit to Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals and add “literature review” or “review of literature as search terms and combine with your topic</li> </ul>
PNAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has Review Article option on opening screen – good source for an overview of the current state of scientific knowledge of a topic and areas yet to be researched, but not exactly a literature review essay.</li> <li>▪ Check the Review Article box and search for your terms in the title and abstract</li> <li>▪ Review Article box is NOT ON ADVANCED SEARCH screen</li> </ul>
MLA (Languages & Literatures) RLIM (Music) ATLA (Religion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No option to limit results to literature reviews</li> </ul>