

# TIPS FOR WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW



## FIRST, UNDERSTAND YOUR TASK:

### What even is a literature review?

A literature review presents an overview of the scholarly conversation around a particular topic. If you think of research papers that you've read, the literature review is usually the section that precedes the author's new research. The literature review presents already existing published information that needs to be understood before the author adds to the scholarly conversation with their new conclusion about the topic. If you want to see some examples of literature reviews, take a look at professional journal articles.

### How is writing a literature review different from writing an argumentative essay?

Argumentative essays rely on evidence and analysis to support a thesis-driven argument about a topic, whereas literature reviews discuss already established arguments about a concept in order to show how the author's new research addresses any gaps in previous research and therefore advances the scholarly conversation. Remember, the literature review is a sub-section of a larger research paper meant to provide published background information about a topic.

### How should you focus your literature review?

Typically, your literature review is focused on a main research question that usually examines some causal relationship between two variables. As the ultimate goal of your literature review is to demonstrate the range of published information that exists around your topic, you should be prepared to explain different answers to your research question throughout your literature review.

## NEXT - RESOURCES:

### What are examples of quality sources?

Strong literature reviews depend upon many high-quality sources to provide a wide range of credible information about your topic. Peer-reviewed journals are a great starting point for finding research articles for your literature review because peer-reviewed work indicates that it is more well-respected in the academic community. Book chapters or government websites are also useful sources of information. Before you start searching for sources, make sure to ask your professor if they have specific criteria for the sources you use or any tips for finding certain types of sources.

### Where do you find sources?

- The SCU Library's List of Online Databases is a great place to start! <https://libguides.scu.edu/az.php>
- Google Scholar is helpful for finding related articles and other articles in which a source was cited: <https://scholar.google.com/>
- Once you've found a valuable source, look through its references. Chances are you'll find other similar sources that will be useful.

## LAST - ORGANIZE YOUR SOURCES:

There are different ways you can organize your sources to provide a comprehensive overview of the scholarly conversation around your topic. Rather than analyzing each source individually, you'll want to find patterns or trends across multiple sources. Think of these as categories or "schools of thought." Some options for organization could include by theme, date, or trend. Your professor may have specific expectations for how you organize your sources, so make sure you check with them before proceeding.