APA Style Guidelines


What is a Literature Review?
A literature review is a critical evaluation of published research on a particular topic. Information from the research literature is organized, integrated, and evaluated to show progress in scientific understanding of the topic. A literature review should contain the following:

• Definition and clarification of the problem
• Summary of previous investigations to show the state of current knowledge
• Identification of relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature
• Suggestions for next step in solving the problem

Selecting Your Sources
Source articles should be chosen so that they all relate to a focused topic. First read the abstract of a potential source; if it appears to be relevant, go on to read the entire article. Evaluate articles on the following:

• Are they scholarly sources, with references cited in the text and also listed at the end of the article?
• Are they primary sources, i.e., first-hand reports of research studies conducted by the author(s) of the article? Look for sections of the article labeled Method, Results, and Discussion. (Note: Secondary sources are sometimes allowed in addition to primary sources; check with your professor.)
• Do they complement each other in terms of topic?
• Do any of the articles suggest competing theories?

Format of Paper

• Entire paper typed in 12-point font
• 1 inch margins at top, bottom, and sides.
• Double-spacing used throughout paper (including abstract and references)
• 5-space indentation at beginning of each new paragraph. Paragraphs should have a focused theme, introducing theme at beginning and ending with conclusion. Paragraphs should be longer than two sentences and shorter than one page.
• Staple pages together; hand in without any additional covering, such as clear plastic folders.

Citing Sources in Body of Paper
It is extremely important that you credit the authors of ideas that are not your own.

• Citation should appear in the very first sentence in which you present another person’s ideas; not at the end of the paragraph! If you continue to describe the ideas of the same author in the same paragraph, you do not need to keep repeating the citation in that paragraph. If you refer to that author's work later in the paper, you should repeat the
Citation.

- Citation includes authors’ last names and year of publication. Authors and year may either be incorporated into the first sentence or given in parentheses at the end of that sentence:
  - Smith and Jones (1976) have argued that learning is essential to survival.
  - Research has shown that learning is essential to survival (Smith & Jones, 1976).
  - Use “and” when citing multiple authors as part of a sentence; use “&” when authors’ names are given in parentheses, as shown above.

- If source has three or more authors, give names of all authors the first time you cite the source; after that, use "et al." (Doe et al., 1985).
- If source has more than six authors, use “et al.” each time you cite the source, including the first time.
- If citing two or more sources together, place in alphabetical order by first author’s last name.

Avoid Using Quoted Material

- Direct quotations are rarely used in scientific writing; instead paraphrase the idea using your own words, and make sure you give the author credit in a citation.
- In the very rare event that you use a quotation, enclose the quoted material with quotation marks, followed by the author, year, and page number in parentheses.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is when you present the ideas of another author as if it were your own work, without giving proper credit to the author. Each time you paraphrase another author, you must credit the author in your text. Quotation marks are used when you are quoting the exact words of another author. Plagiarism is unethical and unacceptable. See additional handout on plagiarism for further information.

Sections of the Paper

Title Page

- Title should clearly identify focus of the paper.
- Title is centered in upper third of page, with your name below the title, and your institution (Indiana University Purdue University Fort Wayne) below your name.
- First two or three words of the title followed by five spaces and then page number in upper right-hand corner of title page and every succeeding page. (Use the automatic header and paging function of your word processor.)

Abstract

- Single paragraph on page 2; no paragraph indent.
- Heading "Abstract" is centered immediately above paragraph at top of page.
- Summarize contents of the paper. Begin with statement of purpose or organizing theme of paper, then briefly describe types of studies reviewed, and end with conclusion.
- Maximum of 120 words.
Body of Paper: Review of Sources

- Starts on page 3; title of paper centered at top.
- Begin body of paper with an opening paragraph introducing theme of paper. Clearly state the purpose or thesis that will be addressed. You may find it helpful to phrase your thesis in the form of a question that you are seeking to answer.
- Following the opening paragraph, proceed with the review of sources. Before writing, make an outline using subheadings showing the order of different aspects of the topic you will present. It may be helpful to use subtopics as headings in the actual body of paper.
- As you address each subtopic, be sure to cite evidence from your sources to support your claims (see “Citing Sources” above). Give only enough information about the methods and results of your sources as needed to make clear what the findings mean, as though you were explaining them to another psychology student. Too much detail may bog down your reader (e.g., your reader probably does not need or want to know every single step of the procedure).
- Integrate the information from various sources as you cover each subtopic. Are these findings consistent or contradictory? What explanations do they offer to explain findings?
- Do not group together all the methods of your sources and then all the results, etc. There should be no sections in your paper labeled “Methods” or “Results” (these subheadings are appropriate only for primary sources, such as the articles you are reading, but not for a secondary review of these sources).
- Present your overall conclusions in your final paragraph(s). Answer the question you set up in the introductory paragraph. What gaps remain in our understanding of the topic? Suggest future directions for research in this area.

References

- References are listed on separate page at end of paper.
- All references cited in paper should be listed.
- Heading “References” centered at top of page.
- References listed in alphabetical order by first author’s last name. If you have two or more sources with same author, use chronological order from earliest to most recent. If several authors with same first author, but different second author, use second author’s last name to determine order.
- If source has more than six authors, use “et al.” after the first six author names.
- First line of each reference begins at left margin; each subsequent line of that reference is indented five spaces.
- Formats vary depending on type of source. See examples below.

Format for article in a journal:


Format for chapter in edited book:


Format for Internet article that is duplicate of a print version:
Perception of Ambiguous Figures

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of context in the perception of ambiguous figures. I review research relevant to the dual-coding theory of perception....
Introduction

Perception of Ambiguous Figures

Ambiguous and reversible figures have played an important role in theory development of mental representations - one versus two codes (Anderson & Bower, 1974; Paivio, 1969).

In the body of the paper

Theories Concerning Representation

Dual-Code Theory

Start of this section ...

Propositional Theory Of Representation

Start of this section ...

Context Affecting Interpretation

Start of this section ...

Conclusions

The perceived direction of heading profoundly influences the interpretation of the species of the ambiguous figure. In
Reference Section

References


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

APA Format:
http://www.apastyle.org/index.html
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html

Additional Information on Starting a Literature Search, Plagiarism, and Other Relevant Topics:
http://users.ipfw.edu/bordens/rdm4/index1.htm