

Literature Reviews

Doing a Literature Review

- (1) Identify a focused question for the literature review
- (2) Locate articles, books, and research reports that address the issue
- (3) Read the articles & identify the ones that are most relevant to your question
- (4) Construct an orderly system to organize the information you have collected

Literature Reviews

"The right way to write a review is to organize common findings or arguments together."

"The wrong way to write a review is to list a series of research reports with a summary of the findings of each."

-Neuman, p. 78

Literature Review

"The first hurdle [in writing the review] to overcome is thinking something must be perfect just because it has been published."

-Neuman, p. 77

Reasons for Doing a Literature Review

- (1) Demonstrate familiarity with a body of literature & establish credibility
- (2) Trace the path of prior research and contextualize your study within it
- (3) Integrate & summarize what is known in an area
- (4) Learn from others & stimulate new ideas

Appropriate Sources for Literature Reviews

Best

- Articles in peer-reviewed academic journals
- Chapters in academic books
- Ph.D. dissertations or M.S. theses

Good

- Government reports or documents
- Reports or documents from international organizations (e.g. World Bank, United Nations)
- Reports or documents from advocacy groups (NGOs)

Appropriate Sources for Literature Reviews

Adequate (under particular circumstances)

- Articles from good newspapers
- Articles from reputable newsmagazines or commentary/opinion journals
- Reputable websites
- Transcripts of broadcast stories

Inappropriate

- Textbooks
- Secondary or tertiary sources
- Unknown websites
- Non-news magazines