

## APA Style Literature Review

A review is a **survey** of relevant published research about a particular problem. The **topic** is the same one pursued in the research proposal or paper. The **discussion** should trace common themes, evaluate the reliability and usefulness of information, and then make comparisons between sources. According to APA (2010), a literature review should do the following:

- Define and clarify the problem
- Summarize previous investigations to inform the reader of the state of research;
- Identify relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature; and
- Suggest the next step or steps in solving the problem. (p. 10)

Formatting for lit review assignments generally follows a formulaic pattern: a bibliographic entry will head a paragraph or more of summary and synthesis for each source presented. A summary is a recap of the work. A synthesis is a re-organization of information in order to apply it to a topic.

If a lit review is a section in a larger paper, it will usually begin with an introductory paragraph to define the topic and/or problem. The section will then summarize, evaluate, and indicate how each source relates to the topic/problem. Discussion paragraphs here cover comparisons (agreement or controversy), gaps, and inconsistencies among the sources. Proposals for further research may be placed in the lit review section or in the conclusion of the research paper.

This handout is based in the assignment instructions, "Writing Assignment Three: Literature Review" for Writing 331-52 at Metropolitan State University taught by Jennifer Ouellette-Schramm in spring semester, 2017.

## Reference

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.