

WRITING CENTER TIP SHEET

Paper Writing Strategies

Organizing a Literature Review

Writing a literature review shares similarities to a basic paper writing structure. However, important differences lie in the body of a lit review. To write the most effective review, follow the suggested structure.

I. Introduction

Serves as the opening of the paper (just like it sounds).

Goals: Introduces readers to your topic, but more specifically, *to the research that has been done on your topic*. For example, “Scientists have written extensively about the environmental destruction caused by the depletion of rainforests.”

- Provide a focused thesis statement expressing the position of the paper, in this case regarding a theory or hypothesis that your research discovered: “Researchers have discovered that the destruction of rainforests has contributed to the loss of over 3000 species.”

Avoid: Stating the obvious, i.e.: “Crime is a big problem,” or, “TV is a popular form of entertainment.”

- Stating your intentions, i.e.: “In this essay, I will show...”

II. Body

This is where the majority of your research is presented. The body of the lit review shows what has been written about your topic, covering several angles.

Goals: Structure your paragraphs carefully, so they’re focused on one article or source at a time.

- Use quotes to help summarize the article—but “sandwich” them between your thoughts. For example:

(writer’s thought) In the article titled “Birds of a Feather,” Dr. Robert Olsen illustrates how parrots are soon to be lost if their natural habitat is not protected. *(supporting quote)*, “By the year 2010, a significant number of the wild parrot population will be eliminated.” *(writer’s thought)* Olsen’s research illustrates the dire need for the protection of our resources.

Avoid: Confusing your readers by discussing two different articles in the same paragraph.

III. Conclusion

The wrap up of the whole review. This section reminds readers where you started (your thesis statement) and briefly recalls the information in the body paragraphs. Lastly, it leaves readers with something to think about—the “so what.”

Goals: Remind readers of your main points, briefly.

- End on a strong note: a quote, look to the future, call to action, etc. What further work needs to be done on this topic? This should give the reader something to think about.

Avoid: Repeating the identical wording from the introduction

- Introducing new ideas—save that for the body paragraphs.
- Contradictions. Stay focused with the main themes in your paper.
- Generalizations. Avoid using “all” and “every” when discussing a topic—there are exceptions to every rule.