Literature Reviews

More than just listing papers, a lit review evaluates the research of others.

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Why review the literature?

A literature review may be written for many reasons, including one or more of the following:

To provide an overview that shows you are familiar with the field

To identify issues, areas of contention or different perspectives

Do not start paragraphs with a quotation or summary of what a certain writer thinks: evidence from the literature comes after the topic sentence. Unless your subject requires quotation from primary sources, keep direct quotation to a minimum. Instead, paraphrase and summarise the words of others.

Group together bibliographical items if their writers all agree, for example:

Several researchers provide similar advice about the best way to structure a literature review (Anderson & Poole, 1998; Day & Gastel, 2006; Dunleavy, 2002; Emerson & McPherson, 1996).

Use factual material to support your points, but do not write paragraphs that simply recount facts. Do not produce a simple history of the topic and do not write long passages of narrative: you are reviewing, not recounting.

If you need to include graphs or tables, label them clearly, number them and mention them in your text.

5. Evaluating

Most literature reviewers are expected to evaluate what they read. T

logic or practice, but it also means commenting on what is valuable and noteworthy. Provide reasons for your judgements and adopt a professional and courteous tone when discussing the work of others.

Your assessment of the works you review should be explicit. Most disciplines