



## Step I: Choosing a Topic

In your general area of interest you have to choose a specific research topic. Decide on the issue you are willing to address and conduct a specific search study. Here are some helpful links:

[Formulating a Research Question Tutorial](#)

[Starting Your Research Process](#)

### **Literature Review**

An essential step in focusing your topic of study is conducting a literature review; this will help you to determine your research question, and give you greater insight into the area that you are studying.

### **What is a literature review?**

“A literature review is a systematic examination of previously published studies on a research issue, which a researcher undertakes and integrates together to prepare for conducting a study or to bring together and summarize the state of research in a given area (Neuman, 2004, p. 360).” It is based on the assumption that knowledge accumulates and that people learn from and build on what others have done (p. 68).

### **Importance of the literature review?**

The literature review is an essential part of the research process that sometimes gets overlooked by those wanting to “get things done.” However, a literature review will ultimately save time and energy in the research process. By conducting a thorough literature review, some of your initial questions may be answered in the literature, and a deeper understanding of the topic can be gained in order to help form more purposeful questions.

## **How to conduct a literature review?**

Once you have selected your topic, you search any number of sources for relevant information including:

- Periodicals
- Scholarly Journals
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Government documents
- Policy reports and presented papers
- Books
- Internet searches

Once you have collected a number of resources, read and synthesize the material you have found into themes that have emerged in the literature. Explore what kinds of studies have been conducted, and identify what areas have been well researched, and where gaps exist in the literature.

A thorough literature review will provide you with a basis for your research question and will prevent you from conducting unnecessary research.

## **How to Write a Literature Review?**

The following is a basic format that can be employed when you are synthesizing the findings from your literature review. By using the following format you will be able to clearly articulate the body of research in an efficient manner. A solid literature review should also highlight gaps in the literature and direction for future research.

### **Literature Review Outline Introduction:**

- Define or identify the general topic, issue or area of concern for the reader.
- Point out overall trends in what has been published about the topic, or conflicts in evidence, and conclusions, or gaps in research and scholarship

### **Body:**

- Group research studies and other types of literature according to common denominators such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches, conclusions of authors, and specific purposes or objectives
- Summarize individual studies or articles with as much or as little detail as each needs according to its comparative importance in the literature
- Provide strong “umbrella” sentences at the beginning of paragraphs, “signposts”

throughout, and brief “so what” summary sentences at various points to aid in understanding your comparisons and analyses of the literature

**Conclusion:**

- Summarize major contributions of significant studies and articles for the body of knowledge under review, maintaining the focus established in the introduction
- Evaluate the current “state of the art” for the body of knowledge reviewed, pointing out major methodological flaws or gaps in research, inconsistencies in theory and areas or issues pertinent to future study.
- Your goal is not to list as many articles as possible or summarizing one piece of literature after another; rather you want to recognize relevant information, and to synthesize and evaluate it and see where your specific research fits

**[Sample Literature Review - Exploring the Integration of Interactive Whiteboards in K-12 Education](#)**

**Helpful Web Links**

[Overview and Literature Review Process](#)

[Tips for Conducting a Literature Review](#)

[Step by Step: How to write a literature review](#)

[How to Write a Literature Review](#)