



# Abstract and Literature Review

## ABSTRACT

Though it can vary by discipline, an **abstract** is a short summary of a larger work for the purpose of condensing the argument, conclusions, and/or results into a paragraph.

An abstract in the social sciences may contain the scope, purpose, results, and main content of the larger work, whereas an abstract in the humanities may contain the thesis, background, and conclusion of the larger work. In any discipline, an abstract does not evaluate the original work, it summarizes it.

When writing your abstract, you should:

- Provide a full citation of the source
- Put the most important information first (the thesis or results)
- Use key words from the original work (but do not define or explain)
- Use concise, clear language

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Though each **literature review** may have a different end goal (be sure to get clarity from your professor about the goal of yours), in general, a literature review is a summary and synthesis of published information (literature) on a specific topic. In essence, you are summarizing the chosen sources on a specific topic; however, you are also synthesizing sources by comparing the analyses, conclusions, methodologies, etc. of the sources.

Unlike an annotated bibliography, which summarizes sources alphabetically one at a time, a literature review may be organized chronologically by publication, by methodology of the literature, by theme or argument of the literature, by trends in the field, etc.



# Writing the Literature Review

## Writing the introduction:

- Identify the general topic and provide context for reviewing the literature.
- Point out any trends in what has been published about the topic; or conflicts in theory, methodology, evidence, and conclusions; or gaps in research and scholarship.
- Establish your reason for reviewing the literature. Explain the criteria to be used in analyzing and comparing the literature and the organization of the review. Also, state why certain literature is or is not included.

## Writing the body:

- Group the literature/sources (reviews, theoretical articles, case studies, etc.) according to common denominators such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches, conclusions of authors, specific purpose or objective, chronology, etc.
- Summarize each source with as much or as little detail as each merits according to its comparative importance in the literature.
- Use strong topic sentences throughout that interpret and synthesize the comparisons and analyze within and between sources.

## Writing the conclusion:

- Summarize major contributions of significant studies and articles to the literature under review, maintaining the focus established in the introduction.
- Evaluate the current “state of the art” for the literature reviewed, pointing out major methodological flaws or gaps in research, inconsistencies in theory and findings, and areas or issues pertinent to future study.
- Conclude by providing some insight into the relationship between the central topic of the literature review and a larger area of study such as a discipline, a scientific endeavor, or a profession.