

The Basics of a Literature Review

A literature review presents the information obtained from searching the scholarly literature on a particular topic.

The literature review differs from a research report because it does not pose and advance an original claim. Instead, it **synthesizes various pieces of the literature** by summarizing individual studies and demonstrating how they relate to each other.



Read widely

Describe common themes and trends

This comprehensive view will provide you and your readers with relevant background information and establish you as a well-read scholar. It will also help you **see where your unique research fits into existing work** in your discipline.¹

As always, be sure to **follow the requirements of your assignment** and to discuss your thoughts and concerns with your professor, colleagues, writing consultants, and librarians.

Here's one example of a short literature review included as part of a published article².

Read closely for hints on how to summarize sub-topics, introduce specific studies, transition through multiple studies, and relate back to a main topic or bigger theme.

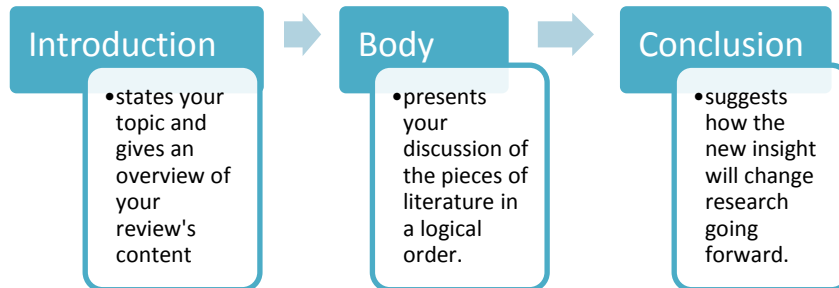
Researchers must explore whether specific groups are at higher risk of abuse. **For example**, are individuals with traumatic brain injury at higher or lower risk for abuse compared to individuals with spinal cord injury? And if so what makes them more at risk? Are they at risk of specific kinds of abusive and neglectful acts by perpetrators? To date **there are no studies that have compared** experiences of abuse among individuals with specific types of disabilities. Only two studies have compared the experience of abuse by disability subgroup. **Nannini (2006) included comparisons** among disability groups when she studied their experiences of sexual assault and help-seeking behaviors after an assault, and **Martin et al. (2006) similarly compared** prevalence rates of physical and sexual abuse utilizing data from the NC-BRFSS survey of 2000–2001. **While this is an important first step**, the categories of disability were largely general (i.e., physical disability, cognitive disability/impairment, mental health, etc.) and overly encompassing.

¹ Information for this handout came from previous TLC handouts and “Literature Reviews,” a handout available on the University of North Carolina Writing Center website, <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/>

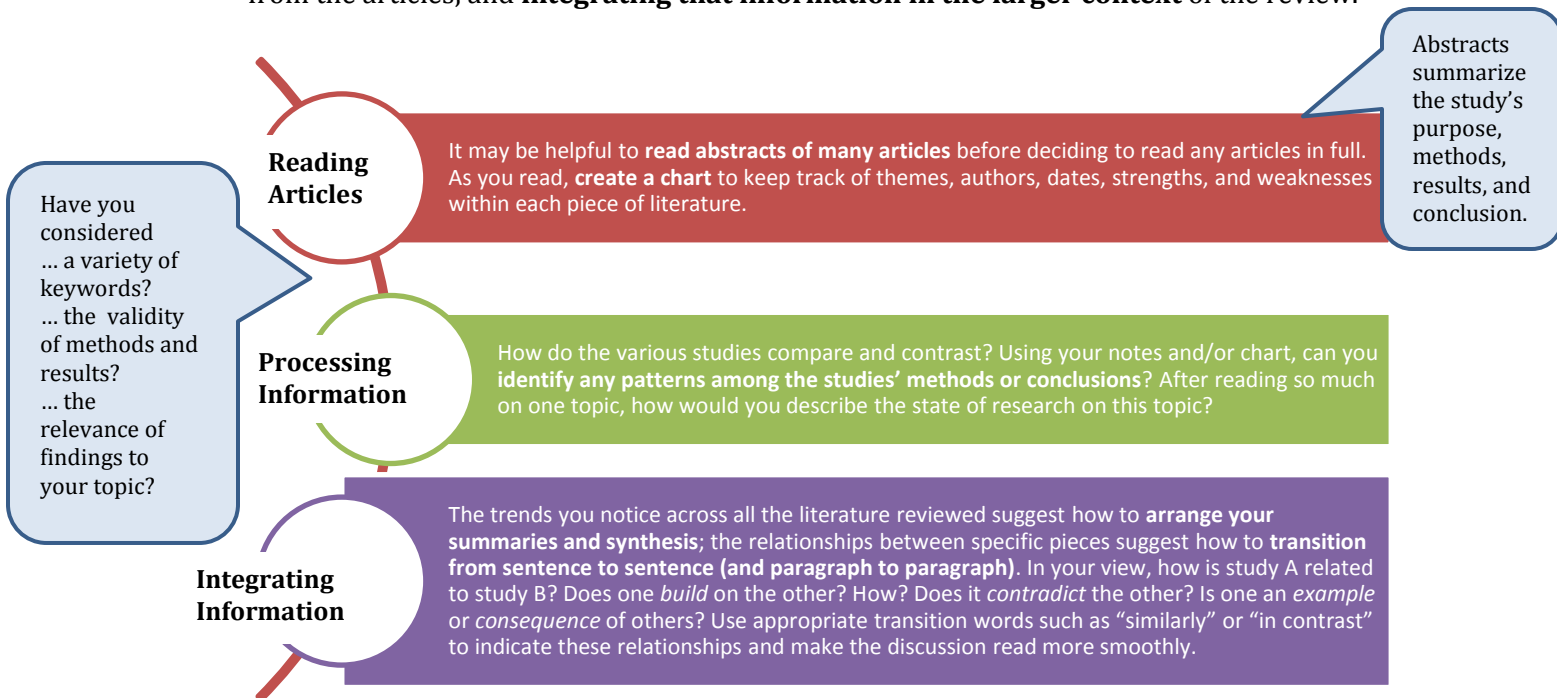
² Plummer, S. & Findley, P.A. (2012). Women with disabilities' experience with physical and sexual abuse: review of the literature and implications for the field. *Trauma Violence Abuse, 13*, 15-29. doi: 10.1177/1524838011426014

Guidelines for Writing Your Literature Review

- ✓ The literature review generally consists of an **introduction, body, and conclusion**.



- ✓ The creation of a literature review involves **reading articles, processing the information** from the articles, and **integrating that information in the larger context** of the review.



- ✓ Remember to practice good academic writing! Always include evidence to support your ideas and **avoid plagiarism by citing your sources** completely and accurately. **Maintain a formal tone** and use appropriate terminology in your writing.