Literature Reviews

A literature review is composed after extensive research on the work published on the selected topic. The writer must read and understand the research in order to summarize and synthesize information. A literature review demonstrates how the writer’s own research fits into the discourse.

Starting a literature review
⇒ Consider the themes that connect your sources
   How is the research similar? What links the arguments together? Are you noticing any trends? Is there any information missing from current research?
⇒ Create a thesis statement for direction
   After considering themes, think about the direction you want your literature review to take. What perspective will your literature review give on the material?

Organizing a literature review
Chronological—writing about resources according to when they were published
Thematic—writing about resources according to the topic they address
Methodological—writing about resources with respect to the methods of the author(s)

Writing recommendations
⇒ Use evidence
   Your interpretation of the research must be supported by evidence.
⇒ Stay focused
   You should only use main points that are relevant to the nature of the review.
⇒ Try to paraphrase often
   You should use direct quotations sparingly, as paraphrasing shows that you understand the material. However, you should be cautious to represent the author’s ideas accurately.
⇒ Summarize and synthesize information
   You need to connect the information in each paragraph to your own work.
⇒ Maintain your voice
   You should be mindful of maintaining your own voice throughout the review, while presenting other authors’ ideas.

* Information adapted from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Writing Center