Tips for Writing a Literature Review

A Literature Review (LR) offers insight into the academic conversations related to a topic. Writing a LR is an extensive process. Here are some tips to guide you:

1) **Decide which LR structure is best for your topic** (i.e., narrative, focused, methodological, meta-analysis, argumentative, integrative, historical, theoretical).

2) **The context of your LR often determines the structure** (i.e., class assignment, dissertation, or article and your academic discipline).

3) **Identify the best organization for your content** (i.e., chronological, perspective, thematic, provenance, method, theory, genre, etc.).

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**Literature Review Organization Chart**

- **Introduction**
  - Topic Overview
  - Goal of LR
  - Context: issues, relevant, missing information
  - Research goals based on research questions

- **Body**
  - Explanation of topic divided into themes
  - Explanation of existing research, methods, and history

- **Conclusion**
  - Summary and evaluation of presented research
  - Areas for further research
  - Justification for your research
4) **Present and discuss rather than list your sources:**
   - What is the topic of each paragraph? Is it a theme? An author? A method?
   - Remember to organize your paragraph content to introduce, illustrate, and discuss the topic.

5) **Annotate as you read your sources:**
   - What is the author’s argument?
   - What methods are used in this research?
   - What are significant findings and claims?
   - What are the connections to your purpose?
   - What do you think is important or interesting about the literature?
   - Is anything missing? Use these notes to inform your body paragraphs.

6) **Alternate the ways you integrate the literature** (e.g., quotes, summaries, paraphrases), and review your reference style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.).

7) **Always leave time to review, revise, and proofread!**

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