

# STRATEGIES FOR WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW

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# OVERVIEW

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- Define literature review
- Discuss its purpose and features
- Research strategies
- Discuss how to write a literature review
- Rhetorical reading guide (RRG) of a lit review
- Grouping & synthesis activity
- Questions

# WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

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- A literature review is a discussion of the relevant (scholarly) literature on your topic of study.
- For example, if I'm studying how professors and students interact with feedback on writing, then I might want to consider the following areas of scholarly literature on the topic:
  - Feedback in higher education
  - Feedback as a form of assessment
  - Feedback styles/types
  - Professors' feedback styles and modalities
  - Professors' perceptions of providing feedback to students
  - Students' perceptions of feedback
  - Peer review

# PURPOSE OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

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- Give readers the context they need to understand your research project
  - Demonstrate your knowledge on the topic to prove your credibility as a researcher
  - Show readers how your study is in communication with, or situated with relevant scholarship on your research topic
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- Note: Your study should be additive in nature, meaning that it adds to the growing body of knowledge on your subject of study.

# STRATEGIES FOR GATHERING LITERATURE

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- Keep a log of your keywords.
- Use a citation management tool such as Zotero, Mendeley, Endnote.
- Start searching in Google Scholar.
- Use your library's online databases, such as ERIC, Ebscohost, JSTOR, etc.
- Just read the abstracts of scholarly journal articles before committing to reading the entire article. Doing so will help you quickly find articles that are most relevant to your research.
- Once you find a good source, read the references—you may be able to find more useful sources from them.
- Take notes on your sources. Highlighting is okay, but making notations will do a better job of helping you remember why you liked what you did about scholarly journal articles. If you don't want to take notes in the margins, write yourself a brief summary of the article including why you liked it and how it will be useful.



# WRITING MOVES TO MAKE WHEN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW

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- ✓ **Always consider your audience!**
- ✓ **Determine the areas of scholarship related to your topic that you will need to discuss.**
- ✓ **Use headings and sub-headings in your review.**
- ✓ **Literature reviews are both an informative and persuasive genre of academic writing.**
- ✓ **Synthesize the information you've gathered and comment on it.**
- ✓ **Organize your literature review by theme or chronology.**

# WRITING MOVES TO MAKE WHEN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW: AUDIENCE

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- **Always consider your audience!** Who is your audience? What will readers expect you to discuss during your literature review? Try to anticipate their expectations.



# WRITING MOVES TO MAKE WHEN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW: STRANDS OF LITERATURE

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- **Determine what areas of scholarship related to your topic that you will need to discuss.** These areas will be your strands of literature that you will eventually weave together as you write your literature review.





# WRITING MOVES TO MAKE WHEN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW: HEADINGS

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- **Use headings and sub-headings in your review.** These help readers to easily see the strands of literature you'll be discussing AND they act as natural transitions from strand to strand.

APA Headings	
Level	Format
1	<b>Centered, Boldface, Title Case Heading</b> Text starts a new paragraph.
2	<b>Flush Left, Boldface, Title Case Heading</b> Text starts a new paragraph.
3	<b><i>Flush Left, Boldface Italic, Title Case Heading</i></b> Text starts a new paragraph.
4	<b>Indented, Boldface Title Case Heading Ending With a Period.</b> Paragraph text continues on the same line as the same paragraph.
5	<b><i>Indented, Boldface Italic, Title Case Heading Ending With a Period.</i></b> Paragraph text continues on the same line as the same paragraph.

# WRITING MOVES TO MAKE WHEN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW: GENRE

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- Literature reviews are both an informative and persuasive genre of academic writing.

## Informative

- Tell/convey information
- Make observations and identify them
- Explain and discuss quotes/quoted material
- Paraphrase

## Persuasive

- Build your argument in a way that you think is more convincing
- Arrange and present your scholarship so as to be convincing
- Use persuasive language (“suggest,” “recommend,” “argue”)

# WRITING MOVES TO MAKE WHEN WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW: SYNTHESIZE

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- **Synthesize the information you've gathered and comment on it.**
  - Synthesis: the composition or combination of parts or elements so as to form a whole
  - Imagine that you are having a dinner party. You as the researcher/writer are the host, and your guests are the relevant scholarship you've read on your topic of study. As the host of the "party", it's your job to introduce your guests to each other and put them in conversation with one another. Since you're the host (researcher/writer), you already know what your guests (scholars) beliefs and opinions are on these related topics/strands, and so it's your job (as the host/researcher/writer) to put them in conversation with one another. How would their thoughts on the subject "sit with" other scholars in the room?
  - Other metaphors might involve you being a DJ and the songs being the scholarship, or you could be the host of a talk show, and the guests are the scholarship you read on the topic, but I hope you get the point.





# EXAMPLE FROM AN ABBREVIATED LITERATURE REVIEW

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- The complete document (RRG Lit Review) can be found on the GWC's website under the tab  
“General Writing Resources”
- <https://wwwcp.umes.edu/grad/writing-resources/>

# GROUPING AND SYNTHESIS ACTIVITY

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- Please develop categories and group the sweets into your categories. Be ready to explain your groupings.



# QUESTIONS?

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- Dr. Kelsie Endicott, [kjendicott@umes.edu](mailto:kjendicott@umes.edu)
- Graduate Writing Center: <https://wwwcp.umes.edu/grad/graduate-writing-center/>