

8. Literature review prompt

Your assignment is to turn in a complete, polished draft by the due date specified by your instructor. If your instructor decides to conduct a peer-review exercise based on the literature review, you will also need to bring a printed copy to class on the day of the peer review exercise.

General Instructions

This is a paper, not just an assignment.

- You will be held accountable for writing clarity, spelling, grammar, word usage, etc.
- Use complete sentences
- Use proper punctuation
- Make sure to choose your words carefully—this is not a conversation, and you have time to revise, so be sure to use words that mean what you think they mean!
- Write concisely! You can say the same thing in two lines or two pages—be sure to choose the former approach!

Your paper will follow a standard format.

- Start with a Title page
- After the Title page, you will need about 3 pages of content (unless your instructor says otherwise). Your instructor may set a maximum page length for the content.
- End with a References section.
- Use APA Style throughout.

You will review empirical literature relevant to your research topic.

- Your literature review must summarize, relate to one another, and relate to your topic a minimum number of peer-reviewed, empirical primary sources published in scholarly journals. This means that each of these papers must be original research conducted by the authors of the paper.
- You may cite additional papers that do not meet these criteria (reviews,

theory/opinion pieces, clinical practice recommendations, etc.), but they do not count towards the required number of sources.

- Consult your instructor for the required number of sources for your literature review. Typical numbers are 4-6 for these student papers, while published research articles often review as many as 20-30.

Suggested project outline:

1. APA-style Title page
2. General introduction to your topic (~1/2 page)
 - a. What is the general topic?
 - b. Why is this topic interesting or important?
 - c. Transition to how it has been/is studied in the past
3. Literature review proper: Review the studies. There are two ways to approach this:
 - a. First option – **use if the papers you are reviewing can be organized by topic**. For instance, if you are researching selective visual attention during auditory distraction in children, you might not be able to find individual studies dealing with all three aspects of your project. Thus, you might review some papers on selective visual attention in children, and some other papers on selective visual attention during auditory distraction (in adults). In this case, you might organize your literature review around these two topics. The length of each topic subsection will probably be about ½ page per study you review in it.
 - i. Use a heading to indicate the more specific topic you are reviewing first
 - ii. Discuss what is known about this topic. For each relevant fact, cite at least one source using a proper APA in-text citation.
 - iii. After you explain the current knowledge, investigate how confident we can be in it. This can take the form of identifying problems or limitations in single studies, or it can entail identifying differences between studies in how they operationalize a key variable.
 - iv. As you discuss each study, also note its approach (for example, was it experimental or correlational? Was it longitudinal or cross-sectional?)

- v. If you are critiquing the study's methods, explain them sufficiently so that a reader will be able to understand the problem—do not assume that your reader has read the studies you are reviewing.
 - vi. You also need to relate each fact you discuss to your own topic. Explain why someone who is reading your paper to learn about your topic should care about what these previous studies found! More specifically, how do these reviewed facts support or conflict with **your** hypothesis?
 - vii. Use a new heading for each new topic, and repeat the above within that subsection.
- b. Second option – **use if the papers you are reviewing all deal with a single topic.** Use at least one paragraph (about 1/2 page) per study. Each paragraph should have roughly the following structure:
- i. Identify the study using a proper citation. Work this in naturally (like you see in the papers you are reporting on)—**do not** ever write something like “The first study is by Smith and Jones (2018).”
 - ii. Why did the authors do this study?
 - iii. What approach did the authors use? (For example, was it experimental or correlational? Was it longitudinal or cross-sectional?) Give additional detail on their method, if relevant to understanding their conclusions and limitations.
 - iv. What were the authors expecting to find and why?
 - v. What did the authors actually find?
 - vi. What is important about these findings in the context of your study? In other words, how is it related to your topic?
 - vii. How is this study related to the other studies you are reviewing?
 - viii. What are the limitations of this study, particularly as they relate to its ability to support or reject **your** hypotheses?
 - ix. Transition to next study
4. Integration: Tying it all together - Here, you need to consider all the studies you reviewed. (~1/2 page)
- a. At the end of the day, what do we already know? What do we still not know?

- b. Collectively, what are the gaps/inconsistencies in this body of research based on this literature review?
 - c. Why are these inconsistencies important?
 - d. How will your study fill these gaps?
 - e. Indicate briefly your major idea or hypothesis
5. APA-style references section

This assignment is (most of) the introduction to the research paper you will develop over the course of this semester. For further guidance on the Introduction section, consult the *Summary and Guide to APA Style* earlier in this lab manual.