

Source: Fraenkel & Wallen (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (6th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

READING AND NOTE-TAKING FOR REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Problem.

State it clearly.

2. Hypotheses or objectives.

List them exactly as stated in the article.

3. Procedures.

List the research methodology used (experiment, case study, and so on), the number of subjects and how they were selected, and the kind of instrument (questionnaire, tally sheet, and so on) used. Make note of any unusual techniques employed.

4. Findings.

List the major findings. Indicate whether the objectives of the study were obtained or the hypotheses were supported. Often the findings are summarized in a table, which might be photocopied and pasted to the back of the note card.

5. Conclusions.

Describe the author's conclusions. Note your disagreements with the author and the reasons for such disagreement. Note strengths or weaknesses of the study that make the results particularly applicable or limited with regard to your research question.

WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW REPORT

After reading and taking notes on the various sources collected, researchers can prepare the initial review. Most literature reviews consist of five parts as follows:

1. The **introduction**, which briefly describes the nature of the research problem and states the research question. The researcher also explains in this section what led him or her to investigate the question, and why it is an important question to investigate.
2. The **body** of the review, which briefly reports what others have found or thought about the research problem. Related studies are usually discussed together, grouped under subheads (to make the review easier to read). Major studies are described in more detail, while less important work can be referred to in just a line or two. Often this is done by referring to several studies that reported similar results in a single sentence, somewhat like this: "Several other small-scale studies reported similar results (Adams, 1976; Brown, 1980; Cartright, 1981; Davis, 1985; Frost, 1987)."
3. The **summary** of the review which ties together the main threads revealed in the literature reviewed and presents a composite picture of what is known or thought to date. Findings may be tabulated to give readers some idea of how many other researchers have reported identical or similar findings or have similar recommendations.
4. Any **conclusions** the researcher feels are justified based on the state of knowledge revealed in the literature. What does the literature suggest are appropriate courses of action to take to try to solve the problem?
5. A **bibliography or references** with full bibliographic data for all sources mentioned in the review. There are many formats that can be used to list references, but the format used by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) is easy to use.