

Your (written) literature review should

- show where your work fits in with what has already been done
- indicate that your work is necessary/ important/ interesting
 - because no-one else has done it and/or
 - you have new light to shed on a question

Getting going

- write notes
- keep a reading journal
 - summarizing
 - asking questions to find connections to your research purpose
 - stating your position on ideas in text (agree? think it's a bit far-fetched?)
 - making links between readings
 - tracing changes in your focus
 - following ideas through in writing

Getting going

- start grouping
- try using a table to classify authors by (eg)
 - approach to particular questions
 - method
 - sources

Bringing it together

Writing a literature review is like:

- persuading an octopus into a glass (Kamler & Thomson 2006)
- scuba-diving in wet concrete (Monash PhD student 2005)

What should I put in?

- another metaphor from Kamler & Thomson: the dinner party
 - you decide
 - who to invite
 - where they should sit
 - criteria
 - relevance to your study
 - importance to the field

How should I organize it?

- themes (approach, topic, debates, historical development) **some kind of grouping is essential**
- must not just go through works one after another
- move from general overview to specific (the closer to your own research, the more detail you need)

Close ups

- what is the argument?
- what kind/aspect of x is spoken about?
- from what position?
- using what evidence?
- what claims are made?
- how adequate are these?
- what does it contribute to my study/thinking?

Kamler & Thomson 2006, p. 42

Introduce and conclude:

Introduction:

- Contextualise
- Classify
- Summarize overall trends

Introduce and conclude:

Conclusion:

- Recapitulate significance of key studies
- Evaluate current state of area
- State topic's relevance to whole study (section)
- Establish relation of your study to gap(s) in research literature

The story

what they say in the field

what they don't say / haven't thought of / call for more work on...

MY CONTRIBUTION

More about reviewing literature

- Learning support for Higher Degree Research Students, Monash University <http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/ndr/write/5.7.html>
- PhD – First thoughts to finished writing, University of Queensland <http://www.uq.edu.au/student-services/phdwriting/index.html>
- Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson (2006). *Helping Doctoral Students Write*. Pedagogies for Supervision. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rudestam, K. E. & Newton, R. R. (1992). *Surviving your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

If you need to talk to someone...

- Learning Skills at Sir Louis Matheson Library <http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/learning-skills/>
- Arts Academic Language and Learning Unit <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/lls/>