

# Preparing a literature review



# Outline

- Uses, purposes and types of lit reviews
- Process model for the literature review
  - Collecting information
  - Evaluating sources
  - Structuring and writing
- Writing tips and common errors/questions



# Learning outcomes

- Identify different types of literature reviews
- Apply evaluation criteria to assess results
- Demonstrate best practices for structuring and writing a literature review





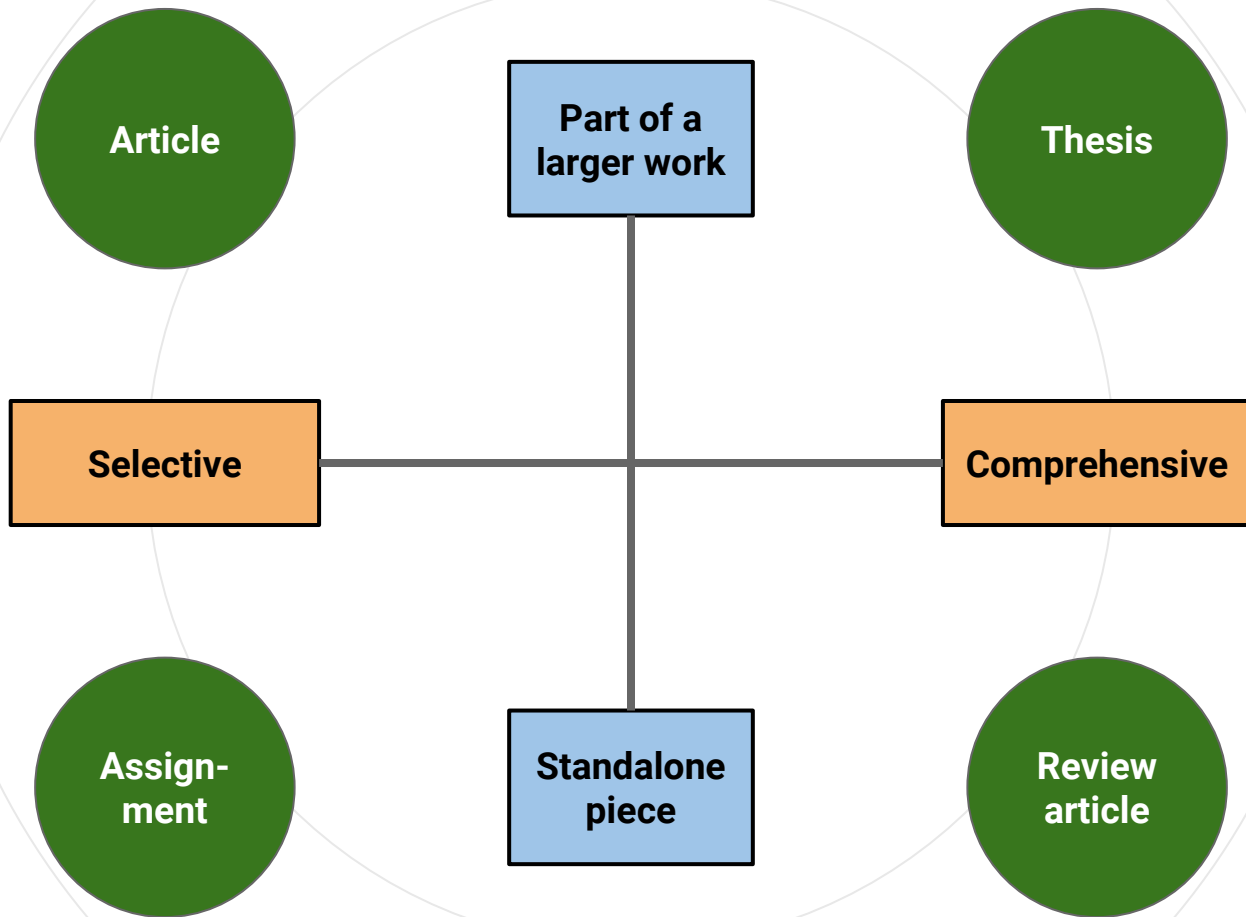
# Question

**What are the  
purposes and goals  
of a literature review?**

# Uses of a lit review

- Focuses and clarifies a research question
- Provides context for the work that follows
- Allows for a better understanding of issues
- Helps position within theory and methods
- Highlights key authors, debates and concepts
- Identifies what has and has not been researched
- Indicates where current work “fits”





# Types of lit reviews

- Argumentative review
  - Supports or refutes a point by subjective selection
  - Requires reader to be more critical
- Integrative review
  - Summarizes and critiques research
  - Generates new perspectives



# Types of lit reviews

- Historical review
  - Traces evolution of theory or model
  - Looks at current research and predicts future applications
- Methodological review
  - Focuses on the “how” of research
  - Identifies studies that contributed to methodology





# Types of lit reviews

- Systematic review
  - Looks at empirical questions studied by many
  - Uses detailed approach to searching and analysis of results
- Theoretical review
  - Presents existing theories and relationships between them
  - Shows gaps or areas warranting further research



A graphic consisting of several overlapping circles of varying shades of gray, with the word "Activity" centered in white text.

## Activity

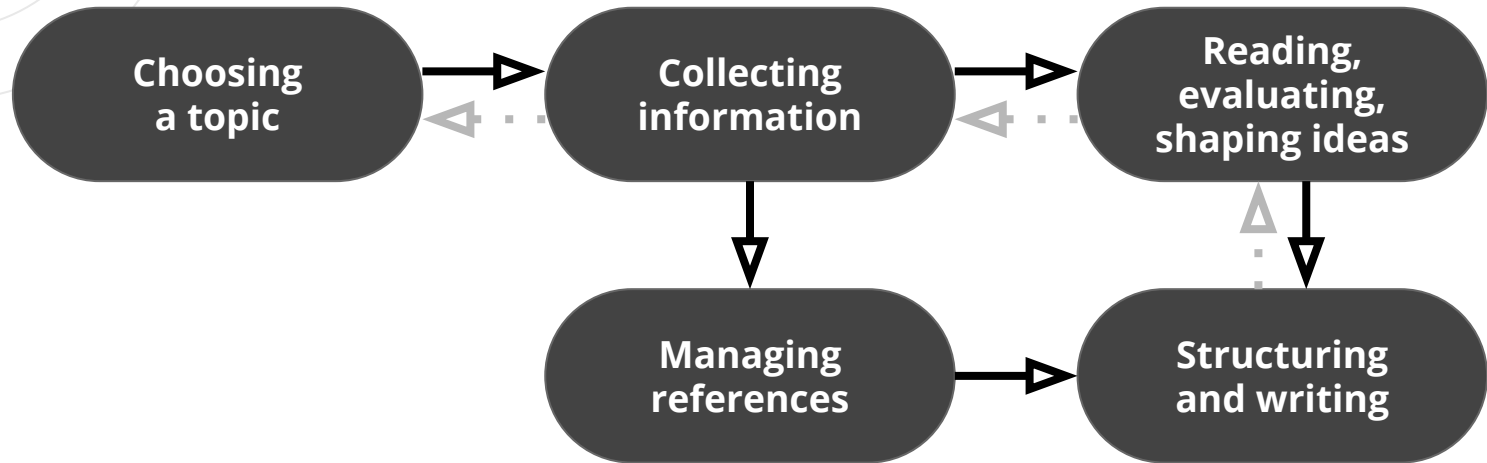
**First, read the lit review and identify some of its strong points and limitations.**

**Then, in small groups, discuss these points to identify characteristics of a good review.**

**Finally, groups will share findings with the larger group.**

A series of five concentric white circles of varying diameters, positioned in the lower right quadrant of the slide.

# Steps involved



# Collecting info (books)

- University of Ottawa
  - [Search+](#)
  - [Classic catalogue](#)
- Other libraries
  - [WorldCat](#)
  - [RACER](#) for [interlibrary loans](#)



# Collecting info (articles)

- Choosing databases
  - Consider subject area of topic and, in some cases, its multidisciplinary nature
- [Research Guides](#)
  - Each department or school has its guide
- [Databases A-Z](#)



# Analyzing results

- Scanning for key information
  - Type of article
  - Title, abstract, first paragraphs
  - Publication date
- Assessing the impact of the article
- Looking at the journal or source
  - Scope and purpose
  - Intended audience
  - Impact factor or other rankings



# Analyzing results

- Grouping articles by topic and date
- Organizing your reading and analysis
  - Consider using a summary table
- Establishing relationships between studies
- Evaluating currency and coverage
- Identifying additional resources
- Using a bibliographic management tool



# Structuring your review

- Look at models in your field
- Look at previous graduate work
- Organize review as a funnel
  - Move from the general to the specific
  - End with research question to be addressed





# Structuring your review

- Organize studies by
  - Theme
  - Methodology
- Make an outline
  - Helps structure your argument
  - Themes/methodologies as headings and subheadings



Piled Higher and Deeper by Jorge Cham

www.phdcomics.com



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

title: "Writing shortcut" - originally published 7/23/2014

# Tips - Introduction

- Describe the general problem area
- Provide an overview of the review
- Explain the importance of the topic



# Tips - Body

- Provide a critical synthesis of literature
- Situate within the context of the field
- Identify relations between different studies
- Identify trends and themes
- Contrast different approaches
- Point out inconsistent findings
- Cite works to strengthen arguments
- Include key studies and authors



# Tips - Body

- Identify gaps in the literature
- Describe methodological quality of research
- Review studies separately if the topic is multidisciplinary
- Use transitions to help follow your argument
  - Use the [Academic Phrasebank](#) for ideas (U. of Manchester)
- Use subheadings in long reviews



# Tips - Conclusion

- Explain how the literature leads to or justifies your research question
- Examples:
  - To test a current theory
  - To retest a hypothesis using a new methodology
  - To study a different population



# Key takeaways

- Thinking of a review's goals according to context
- Finding information is an iterative process
- Analyzing and selecting based on quality
- Preparing a detailed outline
- Reviewing periodically for currency
- Knowing when to stop searching



# References

- [Conducting research literature reviews](#) (A. Fink, 2014)
- [Information skills](#) (J. Grix & G. Watkins, 2010)
- [The literature review](#) (USC Libraries)
- [Literature reviews: an overview for graduate students](#) (NCSU Libraries)
- [The literature review: a step-by-step guide for students](#) (D. Ridley, 2012)
- [Writing a successful thesis or dissertation](#) (F. Lunenburg & B. Irby, 2008)
- [Writing literature reviews](#) (J. Galvan, 2013)



# Sample outline for a literature review

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Outline based on the structure of this article:

Radecki, C. M., & Jaccard, J. (1997). Psychological aspects of organ donation: A critical review and synthesis of individual and next-of-kin donation decisions. *Health Psychology* 16(2), 183-195. doi:10.1037/0278-6133.16.2.183

As cited and presented in:

Galvan, J. L. (2013). *Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*. Glendale CA: Pycszak.

## ***Psychological aspects of organ donation***

### **I. Introduction**

- A. Establish importance of this topic (cite statistics on scarcity of organs)
- B. Delimit the review to psychological components of decisions
- C. Describe organization of the paper

### **II. Individual Decisions Regarding Posthumous Organ Donation**

- A. Beliefs about organ donation
- B. General attitude toward donating
- C. Stated willingness to donate
- D. Summary of research on individual decisions

### **III. Next-of-Kin Consent Decisions**

- A. Beliefs about donating others' organs
- B. Attitude toward next-of-kin donation
- C. Consent decisions
- D. Summary of next-of-kin consent decisions

### **IV. Methodological Issues and Directions for Future Research**

- A. Improvement in attitude measures and measurement strategy
- B. Greater differentiation by type of donation
- C. Stronger theoretical emphasis
- D. Greater interdisciplinary focus

### **V. Conclusion**

- A. Summary of points I to IV
- B. Need well-developed theoretical models of attitudes and decision-making
- C. Current survey data limited in scope (more research)
- D. Need more use of sophisticated data-analysis techniques
- E. Conclusions: Psychology can draw from various subdisciplines for an understanding of donation decisions so that intervention strategies can be identified.

# Resolution, relief, and resignation: A qualitative study of responses to misfit at work

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Excerpt from this article:

Follmer, E. H., Talbot, D. L., Kristof-Brown, A. L., Astrove, S. L., & Billsberry, J. (2018). Resolution, relief, and resignation: A qualitative study of responses to misfit at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(2), 440–465. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0566>

## Abstract

*Research has portrayed person–environment (PE) fit as a pleasant condition resulting from people being attracted to and selected into compatible work environments; yet, our study reveals that creating and maintaining a sense of fit frequently involves an effortful, dynamic set of strategies. We used a two-phase, qualitative design to allow employees to report how they become aware of and experience misfit, and what they do in response. To address these questions, we conducted interviews with 81 individuals sampled from diverse industries and occupations. Through their descriptions, we identified three broad responses to the experience of misfit: resolution, relief, and resignation. Within these approaches, we identified distinct strategies for responding to misfit. We present a model of how participants used these strategies, often in combination, and develop propositions regarding their effectiveness at reducing strain associated with misfit. These results expand PE fit theory by providing new insight into how individuals experience and react to misfit—portraying them as active, motivated creators of their own fit experience at work.*

## Article

*“I fit because I make myself fit.”* Research Participant #15

*“A round man cannot be expected to fit in a square hole right away. He must have time to modify his shape.”* Mark Twain (1897)

5 Research over almost 100 years has established person–environment (PE) fit as a complex antecedent of work-related outcomes (Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006; Chatman, 1989; French, Rodgers, & Cobb, 1974; Murray, 1938). For individuals, good fit is associated with less stress and more trust, team cohesion, and job satisfaction. Organizations also enjoy the benefits of employees who fit well, including reduced employee deviance, cynicism, withdrawal, and turnover (Harold, Oh, Holtz, Han, & Giacalone, 2016; Mulki, Jaramillo, & Locander, 2006; Naus, Van Iterson, & Roe, 2007), as well as better contextual and task performance (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Oh et al., 2014). Schneider’s (1987) attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) model proposes that natural tendencies of self-selection and similarity attraction compel individuals and organizations toward homogeneity and fit. Yet, more recently, scholars have suggested that some degree of misfit is present in most employees’ work situations (Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablinski, 2007).

Misfit is generally conceived as the negative end of the fit continuum, and is associated with discomfort or incompatibility. Scholars have recently advocated that greater attention be paid to the misfit condition to better understand how people experience and navigate through it (Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Yu, 2013). These scholars have portrayed misfit as partially malleable and subject to modification by employees’ cognitions and actions. Viewing employees as arbiters of fit invites new research on how they manage misfit at work. In this study, we use qualitative methods to better understand how people become aware of and experience misfit at work, and what they do in response to it. By doing so, we can assist employees and supervisors in managing fit, thereby reducing the negative consequences of misfit, such as withdrawal, stress, and turnover.

30 Although quantitative studies have documented the association between PE fit and outcomes, they have shed little insight into what employees do when they experience misfit. Pratt (2009: 856) noted that “qualitative research is great for addressing ‘how’ questions – rather than ‘how many’; for understanding the world from the perspective of those studied (i.e., informants); and for examining and articulating processes.” Therefore, a qualitative approach is useful for exploring employees’ experiences of misfit through their own detailed descriptions and for understanding how they respond to these experiences.

35 The first question we address is “How do people become aware of and experience misfit at work?” Empirically, fit scholars have defined misfit as occurring when the person and environment lack correspondence on commensurate dimensions (e.g., Harrison, 2007), or when there is a generalized sense of incompatibility with some element at work (Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). These conditions reflect objective misfit and perceived misfit, respectively. Yet, these relatively sterile definitions do not adequately capture the  
40 experience of being a misfit at work. Participants’ descriptions can provide a deeper level of insight into the experience of misfit as it occurs naturally (Billsberry, Ambrosini, Moss-Jones, & Marsh, 2005; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). This approach can help align points of contention between academic and lay understandings of the concept.

45 It has been well established that turnover is associated with low levels of fit (Arthur et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Yet this relationship is often weak, with average true score correlations rarely exceeding .20. In addition, considering that misfit can occur with any aspect of the environment—job, supervisor, workgroup, or organization—and that leaving an organization is a complex decision involving many factors, it is not surprising that many occurrences of misfit do not result in turnover. Therefore, the second question we address is “What do people do in  
50 response to misfit?” Yu (2009, 2013) suggested that employees are highly motivated to resolve misfit, yet existing research has primarily emphasized poor attitudes and turnover as typical reactions. By allowing people to describe how they have reacted to and handled misfit at work, we shed light on a set of actions that may be overlooked by focusing exclusively on turnover. Specifically, we seek answers to questions such as “Can misfit be resolved by the intentional  
55 action of employees?” “Does misfit ever result in positive consequences, such as personal growth or organizational change?” and “What happens if a person cannot resolve misfit?” By better understanding the array of strategies people use to respond to misfit, we hope to provide suggestions for how to reduce the misfit–turnover association.

60 Through semi-structured interviews with two sets of respondents, we explore people’s personal descriptions of their experiences of, and reactions to, misfit at work. Based on these descriptions, we develop a conceptual framework of the range of employee responses to misfit. Using both preliminary and follow-up interviews, we also form testable propositions regarding the use and efficacy of various approaches for addressing misfit.

## Sample literature review summary table

Author / Year	Purpose / Topic / Focus	Theoretical framework	Methodology	Sample	Timeframe	Variables	Instruments	Key findings / Results / Conclusions	Limitations	Gaps	Comments
Jones (2014)	To investigate the effects of positive reinforcement on task completion rates of elementary school children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Murray (1990) [theory]</li> <li>Craver (1995) [methods]</li> </ul>	Experimental	Simple random	Academic school year [sept. to june]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent = positive reinforcement</li> <li>Independent = reward</li> <li>Dependent = task completion</li> </ul>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive reinforcement is only successful if task completion is linked to a reward</li> <li>No reward, no reinforcement = 36%</li> <li>No reward, positive reinforcement = 62%</li> <li>Reward, positive reinforcement = 91%</li> </ul>	Small sample size (n = 42)	Authors suggest that research focus on greater range of tasks and on large cohorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong elements linked to methodology could be useful in my research and could assist in better focusing the scope.</li> <li>Variety of tasks to be used in my research could help fill identified gap.</li> <li>Follow-up on references from Stark (2012), Chambers et al. (2010) and Johnson et al. (2008).</li> </ul>