

Moving from an Article Critique to a Literature Review

The process of critiquing an individual article is the first step in writing a literature review. In a literature review, you will analyze the structure, organization and qualities. Remember, “reviewing literature” is itself, a form of research (in particular, document analysis). Thus, you will need to approach the literature you read for a review with some questions or purpose in mind. You will need to summarize with some method in mind, analyze, critique and synthesize to reach new conclusions or insights drawn from the literature.

To be a critical reader and writer of literature review you will need to be aware of, and able to recognize the key elements that make up the review process. The four key elements of the review process are: Summary, Analysis, Synthesis and Critique.

Summary (where author summarizes aspects of a single study within the review)	Reviewer reports on what, when how research was conducted; provides overview of the literature and research.
Analysis	Review selects, differentiates, dissects, breaks apart; unpacks something into its constituent parts in order to infer or determine the relationship and /or organizing principles between them; thereby isolating the main variables
Synthesis (refers to places in review where the author is bring together ideas from a number of studies he or she has summarized and critiqued in their article)	Reviewer integrates, combines, recasts, formulates, reorganizes; rearranges the elements derived from analysis to identify relationships or show main organizing principles or show how these principles can be used to make a different phenomenon. Reviewer determines what messages emerge from literature.
Critique	Reviewer scrutinizes literature and research for faulty assumptions, questionable logic, and weakness in methodology, inappropriate data analysis, and unwarranted conclusions.

These elements bring structure to a literature review and their presence determines the qualities of any given review. Learning to read and prepare literature review begins with recognizing these key elements of the review process.