Chapter 10

Guidelines for Writing a First Draft

Up to this point, you have searched the databases for literature on the topic of your review, made careful notes on specific details of the literature, and analyzed these details to identify patterns, relationships among studies, gaps in the body of literature, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of particular research studies. Then, in Chapter 9, you reorganized your notes and developed a detailed writing outline in preparation for writing your literature review.

Actually, you have already completed the most difficult steps in the writing process: the analysis and synthesis of the literature and the charting of the course of your argument. These preliminary steps constitute the intellectual groundwork in preparing a literature review. The remaining steps—drafting, editing, and redrafting—will now require you to translate the results of your intellectual labor into a narrative account of what you have found.

The guidelines in this chapter will help you to produce a first draft of your literature review. The guidelines in Chapter 11 will help you to develop a coherent essay and avoid producing a series of annotations, and it presents additional standards that relate to style, mechanics, and language usage. But first, let's consider writing the first draft.

✔ Guideline 1: Begin by Identifying the Broad Problem Area, but Avoid Global Statements

Usually, the introduction of a literature review begins with the identification of the broad problem area under review. The rule of thumb is, "Go from the general to the specific." However, there are limits on how general one should be in the beginning. Consider Example 10.1.1. As the beginning of a literature review on a topic in higher education, it is much too broad. It fails to identify any particular area or topic. You should avoid starting your review with such global statements.

Example 10.1.1

Fails to identify particular area or topic

Higher education is important to both the economy of the United States and to the rest of the world. Without a college education, students will be unprepared for the many advances that will take place in this millennium.

Contrast Example 10.1.1 with Example 10.1.2, which is also on a topic in education but clearly relates to the specific topic that will be reviewed, bullying in schools.

Example 10.1.2[1]

Relates to the specific topic being reviewed

A significant proportion of children are involved in bullying across their school years. Children who are bullied report a range of problems, including anxiety and depression (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001), low self-esteem (Egan & Perry, 1998), reduced academic performance (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000), and school absenteeism (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003). Bullying may also be a significant stressor associated with suicidal behavior (Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007).

✔ Guideline 2: Early in the Review, Indicate Why the Topic Being Reviewed Is Important

As early as the first paragraph in a literature review, it is desirable to indicate why the topic is important. The authors of Example 10.2.1 have done this by pointing out that their topic deals with a serious health issue.

Example 10.2.1[2]

Beginning of a literature review indicating the importance of the topic

Vitamin D insufficiency is increasing across all age groups (Looker et al., 2008). Recent research implicates vitamin D insufficiency as a risk factor for a variety of chronic diseases, including type 1 and 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, and cancer (Heaney, 2008; Holick, 2006).

Of course, not all issues are of as much universal importance as the one in Example 10.2.1. Nevertheless, the topic of the review should be of importance to someone, and this should be pointed out, as in Example 10.2.2, which points to the wide use of the adjusted Rand index, or ARI, as the main reason for choosing to derive its variance as part of this study.

Example 10.2.2[3]

Beginning of a literature review indicating the importance of the topic

The measure of choice for determining the adequacy of a partition of observations into groups is the adjusted Rand index (ARI; Hubert & Arabie, 1985). The article introducing the ARI is the most highly cited paper ever published in the *Journal of Classification* with 2,756 citations, while a subsequent paper discussing properties of the ARI by Steinley (2004) is in the top 10% of cited papers published in *Psychological Methods* since 2004 with 144 citations. In this article, we derive the variance of the ARI, providing a critical component to the 30-year old measure. After the variance is derived, a simulation exploring the adequacy of using the normal approximation for inference is conducted.

✔ Guideline 3: Distinguish Between Research Findings and Other Sources of Information

If you describe points of view that are based on anecdotal evidence or personal opinions rather than on research, indicate the nature of the source. For instance, the three statements in Example 10.3.1 contain key words that indicate that the material is based on personal points of view (not research)—"speculated," "has been suggested that," and "personal experience."

Example 10.3.1

Beginnings of statements that indicate that the material that follows is based on personal points of view (not research)

"Doe (2016) speculated that . . . ."

"It has been suggested that. . . . (Smith, 2015)."

"Black (2014) related a personal experience, which indicated that. . . ."

Contrast the statements in Example 10.3.1 with those in Example 10.3.2, which are used to introduce research-based findings in a literature review.

Example 10.3.2

Beginnings of statements that indicate that the material that follows is based on research

"In a statewide survey, Jones (2016) found that. . . ."

"Hill's (2012) research in urban classrooms indicates that. . . ."

"Recent findings indicate that . . . (Barnes, 2014; Hanks, 2015)."

If there is little research on a topic, you may find it necessary to review primarily literature that expresses only opinions (without a research base). When this is the case, consider making a general statement to indicate this situation before discussing the literature in more detail in your review. This technique is indicated in Example 10.3.3.

Example 10.3.3

Statement indicating a lack of research

This database contains more than 50 documents, journal articles, and monographs devoted to the topic. However, none are reports of original research. Instead, they present anecdotal evidence, such as information on individual clients who have received therapeutic treatment.

✔ Guideline 4: Indicate Why Certain Studies Are Important

If a particular study has methodological strengths, mention them to indicate their importance, as was done in Example 10.4.1.

Example 10.4.1[4]

Indicates why a study is important (in this case, "a national survey" and "randomly selected")

The Pew Research Center (2007) recently conducted a national survey of 2,020 randomly selected adults and found that 21% of employed mothers

preferred full-time work, 60% preferred part-time work, and 19% preferred no employment.

A study may also be important because it represents a pivotal point in the development of an area of research, such as a research article that indicates a reversal of a prominent researcher's position or one that launched a new methodology. These and other characteristics of a study may justify its status as important. When a study is especially important, make sure your review makes this clear to the reader.

✔ Guideline 5: If You Are Commenting on the Timeliness of a Topic, Be Specific in Describing the Time Frame

Avoid beginning your review with unspecific references to the timeliness of a topic, as in, "In recent years, there has been an increased interest in . . . ." This beginning would leave many questions unanswered for the reader, such as the following: What years are being referenced? How did the writer determine that the "interest" is increasing? Who has become more interested: the writer or others in the field? Is it possible that the writer became interested in the topic recently while others have been losing interest?

Likewise, an increase in a problem or an increase in the size of a population of interest should be specific in terms of numbers or percentages and the specific years being referenced. For instance, it is not very informative to state only that "The number of college students who cheat probably has increased" or that "There will be an increase in job growth." The authors of Examples 10.5.1 and 10.5.2 avoided this problem by being specific in citing percentages and time frames (italics and bold are added for emphasis).

Example 10.5.1[5]

Names a specific time frame

Over the years, research in this area has documented a steady increase in cheating and unethical behavior among college students (Brown & Emmett, 2001). ***Going as far back as 1941, Baird (1980) reported that college cheating had increased from 23% in 1941 to 55% in 1970 to 75% in 1980. Moving forward, McCabe and Bowers (1994) reported that college cheating had increased from 63% in 1962 to 70% in 1993.***

More recently, Burke, Polimeni, and Slavin (2007) stated that "various studies suggest that we may be at the precipice of a culture of academic

malfeasance, where large numbers of students engage in various forms of cheating." The Center for Academic Integrity at Oklahoma State University (2009), conducted a large-scale survey of 1,901 students and 431 faculty members and found some very disturbing results, showing that 60% of college students engaged in at least one behavior that violated academic integrity and that 72% of undergraduate business majors reported doing this, versus 56% from other disciplines. ***Brown, Weible, and Olmosk (2010) also reported that the percentage of cheating in undergraduate management classes in 2008 was close to 100%, which was an increase from the recorded 49% in 1988***.

Example 10.5.2[6]

Names a specific time frame

With the current economy showing signs of a sluggish recovery, employers are cautiously optimistic about what the future holds. Mixed indicators in the unemployment rate, depending on location, may mean an increase in job growth for certain industries. ***A recent economic report released by*** **USA Today** ***shows the strongest 12-month national job growth*** in Construction (3.9%), Leisure and Hospitality (3.4%), Education and Health Services (2.9%), and Professional and Business Services (2.9%) while traditionally strong and stable sectors such as Government (–0.3%) and Utilities (0.3%) are showing slower growth rates (Job Growth Forecast, 2011).

Most universities have writing centers that can be helpful by providing assistance to novice academic writers. Many of these centers maintain useful guides on their websites. One such site, which provides guidance to writers, can be found at: http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk. This site groups commonly used phrases found in academic writing into useful categories, such as Classifying and Listing, Describing Trends, Signaling Transition, Being Cautious, and so on.

✔ Guideline 6: If Citing a Classic or Landmark Study, Identify It as Such

Make sure that you identify the classic or landmark studies in your review. Such studies are often pivotal points in the historical development of the published literature. In addition, they are often responsible for framing a particular question or a research tradition, and they also may be the original source of key concepts

or terminology used in the subsequent literature. Whatever their contribution, you should identify their status as classics or landmarks in the literature. Consider Example 10.6.1, in which a landmark study (one of the earliest investigations on the topic) is cited (emphasis added).

Example 10.6.1[7]

Identifies a landmark study

A few studies have examined the direct and indirect links between victimization and achievement in elementary school over time. ***In one of the earliest investigations on this topic***, Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) showed that peer victimization experiences served as a precursor of school adjustment problems (e.g., academic achievement, school avoidance, loneliness) across the kindergarten year.

✔ Guideline 7: If a Landmark Study Was Replicated, Mention That and Indicate the Results of the Replication

As noted in the previous guideline, landmark studies typically stimulate additional research. In fact, many are replicated a number of times, by using different groups of participants or by adjusting other research design variables. If you are citing a landmark study and it has been replicated, you should mention that fact and indicate whether the replications were successful. This is illustrated in Example 10.7.1 (italics and bold are added for emphasis).

Example 10.7.1[8]

Points at new evidence that questions prior hypothesis

In order to explain the difficulties experienced by children with the passive structure, Borer and Wexler (1987) put forward the A-chain maturation hypothesis, according to which children manage to master verbal passives at the age of 5 or 6. […]

However, ***the A-chain maturation approach is at odds with evidence coming from the acquisition of other A-movement constructions*** where children behave adultlike, such as reflexive–clitic constructions (Snyder & Hyams, 2014) and subject-to-subject raising (Becker, 2006; Choe, 2012; Orfitelli, 2012).

✔ Guideline 8: Discuss Other Literature Reviews on Your Topic

If you find an earlier published review on your topic, it is important to discuss it in your review. Before doing so, consider the following questions:

How is the other review different from yours?

- Is yours substantially more current?
- Did you delimit the topic in a different way?
- Did you conduct a more comprehensive review?
- Did the earlier reviewer reach the same major conclusions that you have reached?

How worthy is the other review of your readers' attention?

- What will they gain, if anything, by reading your review?
- Will they encounter a different and potentially helpful perspective?
- What are its major strengths and weaknesses?

An honest assessment of your answers to these questions may either reaffirm your decision to select your current topic, or it may lead you to refine or redirect your focus in a more useful and productive direction.

✔ Guideline 9: Describe Your Reasons for Choosing Not to Discuss a Particular Issue

If you find it necessary to omit discussion of a *related issue*, it is appropriate to explain the reasons for your decision, as in Example 10.9.1. Needless to say, your review should completely cover the specific topic you have chosen, unless you provide a rationale for eliminating a particular issue. It is not acceptable to describe just a portion of the literature on your topic (as you defined it) and then refer the reader to another source for the remainder. However, the technique illustrated in Example 10.9.1 can be useful for pointing out the reasons for not reviewing an issue in detail in the review (italics and bold are added for emphasis).

Example 10.9.1[9]

Explains why an issue will not be discussed

To date, attempts to marry the generalized linear mixed model with chained equations imputation have met with limited success. For example, Zhao and Yucel (2009) examined chained equations imputation in a simple random

intercept model with one continuous and one binary variable. The method worked well when the intraclass correlation was very close to zero but produced unacceptable coverage rates in other conditions (coverage values ranged between .40 and .80). Performance aside, the procedure is computationally intensive and prone to convergence failures because the Gibbs sampler requires an iterative optimization step that fits a linear mixed model to the filled-in data. Zhao and Yucel (2009) reported that convergence failures were common as the intraclass correlation increased, and our own attempts to apply chained equations imputation to a random intercept model with a binary outcome produced convergence failures over 40% of the time. Collectively, these findings cast doubt on the use of generalized linear mixed models for categorical variable imputation; if the simplest random intercept models produce estimation failures and poor coverage rates, it is unlikely that the method will work in realistic scenarios involving random slopes or complex mixtures of categorical and continuous variables. ***Given these difficulties, we provide no further discussion of this approach.***

✔ Guideline 10: Justify Comments Such As "No Studies Were Found"

If you find a gap in the literature that deserves mention in your literature review, explain how you arrived at the conclusion that there is a gap. At the very least, explain how you conducted the literature search, which databases you searched, and the dates and other parameters you used. You do not need to be overly specific, but the reader will expect you to justify your statement about the gap.

To avoid misleading your reader, it is a good idea early in your review to make statements such as the one shown in Example 10.10.1. This will protect you from criticism if you point out a gap when one does not actually exist. In other words, you are telling your reader that there is a gap as determined by the use of *a particular search strategy*.

Example 10.10.1[10]

Describes the strategy for searching literature

We systematically searched for relevant studies until February 2011. We started with an initial set of reports on children with incarcerated parents collected in our previous research on this topic. Four methods were used to search for additional studies. First, keywords were entered into 23 electronic

databases and Internet search engines. The keywords entered were (*prison** or *jail** or *penitentiary* or *imprison** or *incarcerat** or *detention*) and *(child** or *son** or *daughter** or *parent** or *mother** or *father**) and (*antisocial** or *delinquen** or *crim** or *offend** or *violen** or *aggressi** or *mental health* or *mental illness* or *internaliz** or *depress** or *anxiety* or *anxious* or *psychological** or *drug** or *alcohol** or *drink** or *tobacco* or *smok** or *substance* or *education** or *school* or *grade** or *achievement*).

Second, bibliographies of prior reviews were examined (Dallaire, 2007; S. Gabel, 2003; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Johnston, 1995; Murray, 2005; Murray & Farrington, 2008a; Myers et al., 1999; Nijnatten, 1998) as well as edited books on children of incarcerated parents (Eddy & Poehlmann, 2010; K. Gabel & Johnston, 1995; Harris & Miller, 2002; Harris, Graham, & Carpenter, 2010; Shaw, 1992b; Travis & Waul, 2003). Third, experts in the field were contacted to request information about any other studies that we might not have located. The first group of experts contacted consisted of about 65 researchers and practitioners who we knew were professionals with an interest in children with incarcerated parents. The second group consisted of about 30 directors of major longitudinal studies in criminology . . . .

✔ Guideline 11: Avoid Long Lists of Nonspecific References

In academic writing, references are used in the text of a written document for at least two purposes. First, they are used to give proper credit to an author for an idea or, in the case of a direct quotation, for a specific set of words. A failure to do so would constitute plagiarism. Second, references are used to demonstrate the breadth of coverage given in a manuscript. In an introductory paragraph, for instance, it may be desirable to include references to several key studies that will be discussed in more detail in the body of the review. However, it is inadvisable to use long lists of references that do not specifically relate to the point being expressed. For instance, in Example 10.11.1, the long list of nonspecific references in the first sentence is probably inappropriate. Are these all empirical studies? Do they report their authors' speculations on the issue? Are some of the references more important than others? It would have been better for the author to refer the reader to a few key studies, which themselves would contain references to additional examples of research in that particular area, as illustrated in Example 10.11.2.

Example 10.11.1

First sentence in a literature review (too many nonspecific references)

Numerous writers have indicated that children in single-parent households are at greater risk for academic underachievement than children from two-parent households (Adams, 2015; Block, 2014; Doe, 2013; Edgar, 2015; Hampton, 2009; Jones, 2015; Klinger, 2008; Long, 2011; Livingston, 2010; Macy, 2011; Norton, 2012; Pearl, 2012; Smith, 2009; Travers, 2010; Vincent, 2011; West, 2008; Westerly, 2009; Yardley, 2011).

Example 10.11.2

An improved version of Example 10.11.1

Numerous writers have suggested that children in single-parent households are at greater risk for academic underachievement than children from two-parent households (e.g., see Adams, 2015, and Block, 2014). Three recent studies have provided strong empirical support for this contention (Doe, 2013; Edgar, 2015; Jones, 2015). Of these, the study by Jones (2015) is the strongest, employing a national sample with rigorous controls for. . . .

Notice the use of "e.g., see . . . ," which indicates that only some of the possible references are cited for the point that the writers have suggested. You may also use the Latin abbreviation *cf.* (which means *compare*).

✔ Guideline 12: If the Results of Previous Studies Are Inconsistent or Widely Varying, Cite Them Separately

It is not uncommon for studies on the same topic to produce inconsistent or widely varying results. If so, it is important to cite the studies separately in order for the reader to interpret your review correctly. The following two examples illustrate the potential problem. Example 10.12.1 is misleading because it fails to note that the previous studies are grouped according to the two extremes of the percentage range given. Example 10.12.2 illustrates a better way to cite inconsistent findings.

Example 10.12.1

Inconsistent results cited as a single finding (undesirable)

In previous studies (Doe, 2013; Jones, 2015), parental support for requiring students to wear school uniforms in public schools varied considerably, ranging from only 19% to 52%.

Example 10.12.2

Improved version of Example 10.12.1

In previous studies, parental support for requiring students to wear school uniforms has varied considerably. Support from rural parents varied from only 19% to 28% (Doe, 2013), while support from suburban parents varied from 35% to 52% (Jones, 2015).

✔ Guideline 13: Speculate on the Reasons for Inconsistent Findings in Previous Research

The authors of Example 10.13.1 speculate on inconsistent findings regarding shame about in-group moral failure (italics and bold are added for emphasis).

Example 10.13.1[11]

Speculation of inconsistent findings of previous research (desirable)

We ***think*** that the inconsistent findings regarding shame about in-group moral failure ***may result*** from the rather broad conceptualization of shame in past work. As Gausel and Leach (2011) recently pointed out, different studies of shame have conceptualized the emotion as involving quite different combinations of appraisal and feeling. Some previous work conceptualizes shame as a combination of the appraisal of *concern for condemnation* and an attendant *feeling of rejection*. Most previous work conceptualizes shame as a combination of the appraisal that the self *suffers a defect* and an attendant *feeling of inferiority*.

✔ Guideline 14: Cite All Relevant References in the Review Section of a Thesis, Dissertation, or Journal Article

When writing a thesis, dissertation, or an article for publication in which the literature review precedes a report of original research, typically you should first cite all the relevant references in the literature review of your document. Avoid introducing new references to literature in later sections, such as the results or discussion sections. Make sure you have checked your entire document to ensure that the literature review section or chapter is comprehensive. You may refer back to a previous discussion of a pertinent study when discussing your conclusions, but the study should have been referenced first in the literature review at the beginning of the thesis, dissertation, or article.

✔ Guideline 15: Emphasize the Need for Your Study in the Literature Review Section or Chapter

When writing a thesis, a dissertation, or an article for publication in which the literature review precedes a report of original research, you should use the review to help justify your study. You can do this in a variety of ways, such as pointing out that your study (a) closes a gap in the literature, (b) tests an important aspect of a current theory, (c) replicates an important study, (d) retests a hypothesis using new or improved methodological procedures, (e) is designed to resolve conflicts in the literature, and so on.

Example 10.15.1 was included in the literature review portion of a research report designed to examine the variables linked to success in adult continuing education learners of British Sign Language in the UK. In their review, the authors point out gaps in the literature and indicate how their study addresses these gaps and adds to the understanding of this population. This is a strong justification for the study.

Example 10.15.1[12]

Justifies a study

The study contained several unique elements. First, data were collected from three colleges of further education in the UK that differed in some aspects of their mode of delivery. Further education in the UK is similar to continuing education in the United States. It is education that follows compulsory post-16 secondary education, but which usually is not at degree level. Two centers offered provision that was typical of the UK. A third center included several atypical initiatives in its provision, such as additional weekly conversational

> classes, which had the potential to enhance the student experience. Comparison of the centers' success rates offered the prospect of evaluating the impact of these differences on success. Second, this article investigates variables that might be important for success in UK Level 1 and 2 courses. The levels are equivalent to the first and second years of a UK General Certificate of Secondary Education qualification. […] Third, information was collected on several variables that had not been tested before in L2 sign language learning context (e.g., self-reported visual thinking style).

Activities for Chapter 10

Directions: For each of the model literature reviews that your instructor assigns, answer the following questions. The model literature reviews are presented near the end of this book.

1. Describe the broad problem area addressed by each of the model reviews. Did each of the authors adequately explain this broad problem at the start of their reviews? Explain your answer.
2. Did the authors make clear for the reader the importance of the topic being reviewed? How? Was this effective, in your opinion?
3. Did the authors distinguish between research findings and other sources of information by using appropriate wording? Explain how this was done.
4. Was a landmark study cited? If yes, was it described as such? What relationship exists, if any, between the landmark study and the study presented in the review?
5. Are there references to other reviews on related issues that are not discussed in detail in the model literature review? Explain why they are referenced.
6. If an author stated that "no studies were found" on some aspect of the topic, was this statement justified (as indicated in this chapter)?

Notes

1 Hunt, C., Peters, L., & Rapee, R. M. (2012). Development of a measure of the experience of being bullied in youth. *Psychological Assessment*, *24*, 156–165.
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3 Steinley D., Brusco, M. J., & Hubert, L. (2016). The variance of the adjusted Rand index. *Psychological Methods*, *21*, 261–272.
4 Buehler, C., O'Brien, M., & Walls, J. K. (2011). Mothers' part-time employment: Child, parent, and family outcomes. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, *3*, 256–272.
5 Burton, J. H., Talpade, S., & Haynes, J. (2011). Religiosity and test-taking ethics among business school students. *Journal of Academic and Business Ethics*, *4*, 1–8.
6 Butler, T. H. & Berret, B. A. (2012). A generation lost: The reality of age discrimination in today's hiring practices. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, *9*, 1–11.
7 Juvonen, J., Wang, Y., & Espinoza, G. (2011). Bullying experiences and compromised academic performance across middle school grades. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, *31*, 152–173.
8 Volpato, F., Verin, L., & Cardinaletti, A. (2016). The comprehension and production of verbal passives by Italian preschool-age children. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *37*, 901–931.
9 Enders, C. K., Mistler, S. A., & Keller, B. T. (2016). Multilevel multiple imputation: A review and evaluation of joint modeling and chained equations imputation. *Psychological Methods*, *21*, 222–240.
10 Murray, J., Farrington, D. P., & Sekol, I. (2012). Children's antisocial behavior, mental health, drug use, and educational performance after parental incarceration: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *138*, 175–210.
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12 Allbutt, J. & Ling, J. (2016). Adult college learners of British Sign Language: Educational provision and learner self-report variables associated with exam success. *Sign Language Studies*, *16*, 330–360.