

Types of Literature Reviews

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Label	Description	Search	Appraisal	Synthesis		Analysis
Critical review	Aims to demonstrate writer has extensively researched literature and critically evaluated its quality. Goes beyond mere description to include degree of analysis and conceptual innovation. Typically results in hypothesis or mode	Seeks to identify most significant items in the field	No formal quality assessment. Attempts to evaluate according to contribution	Typically narrative, perhaps conceptual or chronological		Significant component: seeks to identify conceptual contribution to embody existing or derive new theory
Literature review	Generic term: published materials that provide examination of recent or current literature. Can cover wide range of subjects at various levels of completeness and comprehensiveness. May include research findings	May or may not include comprehensive searching	May or may not include quality assessment	Typically narrative		Analysis may be chronological, conceptual, thematic, etc.
Meta-analysis	Technique that statistically combines the results of quantitative studies to provide a more precise effect of the results	Aims for exhaustive, comprehensive searching. May use funnel plot to assess completeness	Quality assessment may determine inclusion/exclusion and/or sensitivity analyses	Graphical and tabular with narrative commentary	Numerical analysis of measures of effect assuming absence of heterogeneity	

<p>Scoping review</p>	<p>Preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature. Aims to identify nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)</p>	<p>Completeness of searching determined by time/scope constraints. May include research in progress</p>	<p>No formal quality assessment</p>	<p>Typically tabular with some narrative commentary</p>	<p>Characterizes quantity and quality of literature, perhaps by study design and other key features. Attempts to specify a viable review</p>
<p>Systematic review</p>	<p>Seeks to systematically search for, appraise and synthesis research evidence, often adhering to guidelines on the conduct of a review</p>	<p>Aims for exhaustive, comprehensive searching</p>	<p>Quality assessment may determine inclusion/exclusion</p>	<p>Typically narrative with tabular accompaniment</p>	<p>What is known; recommendations for practice. What remains unknown; uncertainty around findings, recommendations for future research</p>
<p>Umbrella review</p>	<p>Specifically refers to review compiling evidence from multiple reviews into one accessible and usable document. Focuses on broad condition or problem for which there are competing interventions and highlights reviews that address these interventions and their results</p>	<p>Identification of component reviews, but no search for primary studies</p>	<p>Quality assessment of studies within component reviews and/or of reviews themselves</p>	<p>Graphical and tabular with narrative commentary</p>	<p>What is known; recommendations for practice. What remains unknown; recommendations for future research</p>