



# Task 1 Individual Research Report: Writing Literature Reviews

Module 5, Foundations for Collaborative Research

# The College Board's Task 1, Collaborative Research (Part 1)

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## Task Overview—A Review

Students work in teams of three to five to identify, investigate, and analyze an academic or real-world problem or issue, e.g., local, national, global, academic/theoretical/philosophical). Each team develops a team research question and conducts preliminary research. They identify approaches, perspectives, or lenses and divide responsibilities among themselves for individual research that will address the team's research question. Then, collectively, each team designs and/or considers options and evaluates alternatives; develops a multimedia presentation to present the argument for their proposed solution or resolution; and provides an oral defense to questions posed by the teacher.

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# The College Board's Task 1, Collaborative Research Part 2

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## The Components

### Individual Research Report (IRR)

- ★ 1200-word report, literature review
- ★ Scored by The College Board
- ★ Half the score for Task 1 (10% of overall score)

### Team Presentation and Defense (TMP)

- ★ 8-10 presentation of argument
  - ★ One oral defense question per group member
  - ★ Scored by teacher/advisor after passing certification
  - ★ Half the score for Task 1 (10% of overall score)
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# The College Board's Task 1 IRR: From the AP Seminar Handbook

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Individually, students investigate their assigned approach, perspectives, or lens on the issue or topic of the team research question. Each student presents his or her findings and analysis to the group in a well-written individual report that:

- ✓ identifies the area of investigation and its relationship to the overall problem or issue;
- ✓ summarizes, explains, analyzes, and evaluates the main ideas and reasoning in the chosen sources;
- ✓ identifies, compares, and interprets a range of perspectives about the problem or issue; and
- ✓ cites all sources and includes a list of works cited or a bibliography.

Students must avoid plagiarism by acknowledging, attributing, and/or citing sources throughout the paper and including a bibliography or works cited (see the AP Capstone Policy on Plagiarism and Falsification or Fabrication of Information).

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# The College Board's AP Seminar Policy

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Participating teachers shall inform students of the consequences of plagiarism and instruct students to ethically use and acknowledge the ideas and work of others throughout their coursework. The student's individual voice should be clearly evident, and the ideas of others must be acknowledged, attributed, and/or cited.

A student who fails to acknowledge the source or author of any information or evidence taken from the work of someone else through citation, attribution, or reference in the body of the work or a bibliographic entry will receive a score of 0 on that component of the AP Seminar and/or AP Research Performance Task. In AP Seminar, a team of students that fails to properly acknowledge sources or authors on the Team Multimedia Presentation will receive a group score of 0 for that component of the Team Project and Presentation.

A student who incorporates falsified or fabricated information (e.g., evidence, data, sources, and/or authors) will receive a score of 0 on that particular component of the AP Seminar and/or AP Research Performance Task. In AP Seminar, a team of students that incorporates falsified or fabricated information in the Team Multimedia Presentation will receive a group score of 0 for that component of the Team Project and Presentation.





## Literature Reviews—*Not* Your Typical Essay

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A literature review assignment is a broad-ranging, critical view of the literature on a particular topic. The main aim of a literature review assignment is to summarize and critically evaluate the literature to establish current knowledge of a topic.

Although a literature review is structured like an essay and is often a similar length, there are differences: in an essay, you argue a point of view, whereas, in a literature review assignment, you critically analyze the literature to understand what is known about a topic.

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# Literature Reviews, In Depth (Part 1)

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The researcher doesn't merely report the related literature in a good literature review. He or she also evaluates, organizes, and synthesizes what others have done. But in addition to evaluating what you read, you must also organize the ideas you encounter during your review. In many cases, the subproblems within your main problem can provide a general organizational scheme you can use.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you must synthesize what you have learned from your review. In other words, you must pull together the diverse perspectives and research results you have read into a cohesive whole.

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## Literature Reviews, In Depth (Part 2)

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Here are some examples of what you might do:

- Identify common themes that run throughout the literature.
- Show how approaches to the topic have changed over time.
- Compare and contrast varying theoretical perspectives on the topic.
- Describe general trends in research findings.
- Identify discrepant or contradictory findings and suggest possible explanations for such discrepancies.

When you write a literature review that does such things, you have contributed something new to the knowledge in the field even before conducting your own study. In fact, a literature review that makes such a contribution is often publishable in its own right.



# The Benefits



- ★ Help you ascertain whether other researchers have already addressed and answered your research problem or at least some of its subproblems.
- ★ Offer new ideas, perspectives, and approaches that may not have occurred to you.
- ★ Inform you about others who work in this area whom you may wish to contact for advice or feedback.
- ★ Alert you to controversial issues and gaps in understanding that have not yet been resolved that you might address in your work.
- ★ Show you how others have handled methodological and design issues in studies similar to yours.
- ★ Reveal sources of data you may not have known existed.
- ★ Introduce you to measurement tools that other researchers have developed and effectively used.
- ★ Help you interpret and make sense of your findings and, ultimately, help you tie your results to the work of those who have preceded you.
- ★ Bolster your confidence that your topic is worth studying because others have invested considerable time, effort, and resources in studying it.

# Types of Literature Reviews

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- Argumentative Review
- Integrative Review
- Historical Review
- Methodological Review
- Systematic Review
- Theoretical Review

\*The descriptions on the following slides are attributed to the work of the University of Southern California, cited in their Library's Research Guides.

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# Argumentative Review

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Examines literature selectively to support or refute an argument, deeply imbedded assumption, or philosophical problem already established in the literature.



The purpose is to develop a body of literature that establishes a **contrarian viewpoint**.



Given the value-laden nature of some social science research [e.g., educational reform; immigration control], argumentative approaches to analyzing the literature can be a legitimate and important form of discourse.



However, note that they can also introduce problems of bias when they are used to make summary claims of the sort found in systematic reviews.

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# Integrative Review

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Reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated.



The body of literature includes all studies that address related or identical hypotheses.



A well-done integrative review meets the same standards as primary research regarding clarity, rigor, and replication.

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# Historical Review

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Few things rest in isolation from historical precedent. Historical reviews are focused on examining research throughout a period of time.



Often start with the first time an issue, concept, theory, or phenomenon emerged in the literature, then tracing its evolution within the scholarship of a discipline.



The purpose is to place research in a historical context to show familiarity with state-of-the-art developments and to identify the likely directions for future research.

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# Methodological Review

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A review does not always focus on **what** someone said [content], but on **how** they said it [method of analysis].



This approach provides a framework of understanding at different levels (i.e., those of theory, substantive fields, research approaches, and data collection and analysis techniques).



It also enables researchers to draw on a wide variety of knowledge ranging from the conceptual level to practical documents for use in fieldwork in the areas of ontological and epistemological consideration, quantitative and qualitative integration, sampling, interviewing, data collection, and data analysis.



And helps highlight many ethical issues which we should be aware of and consider as we go through our study.

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# Systematic Review

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Consists of an overview of existing evidence pertinent to a clearly formulated research question, which uses pre-specified and standardized methods to identify and critically appraise relevant research and to collect, report, and analyze data from the studies included in the review.



Typically, it focuses on a very specific empirical question, often posed in a cause-and-effect form, such as “To what extent does A contribute to B?”

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# Theoretical Review

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Purpose is to examine the corpus of theory that has accumulated regarding an issue, concept, theory, or phenomenon.



Helps establish what theories already exist, the relationships between them, to what degree the existing theories have been investigated, and to develop new hypotheses to be tested.



Often this form is used to help establish a lack of appropriate theories or reveal that current theories are inadequate for explaining new or emerging research problems.



The unit of analysis can focus on a theoretical concept or a whole theory or framework.

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# Where to Begin



- Read lots of things.
- Take note of the most relevant.
- Analyze the argument and credibility of each of the most relevant sources-go a step further by addressing how they explicitly relate to your research question and chosen lens.
- Synthesize them together (more to come on this).

\*The basis of these skills above = Annotated Bibliographies--note the appearance of AP Seminar Exam Part A

# Common Problems (Part 1)



- Sources in your literature review do not clearly relate to the research problem.
- You do not take sufficient time to define and identify the most relevant sources to use in the literature review related to the research problem.
- Relies exclusively on secondary analytical sources rather than including relevant primary research studies or data.
- Uncritically accepts another researcher's findings and interpretations as valid rather than examining all aspects of the research design and analysis critically.

(Source: University of Southern California Research Guide)

## Common Problems (Part 2)

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- It does not describe the search procedures that were used in the literature review.
- Reports isolated statistical results rather than synthesizing them in chi-squared or meta-analytic methods.
- Only includes research that validates assumptions and does not consider contrary findings and alternative interpretations found in the literature.

# Tips from AP Readers (Part 1)



- ★ Make sure your topic is specific, narrow, and explicitly/clearly stated.
- ★ Make sure you've addressed WHY your topic merits investigation (what's at stake?).
- ★ Need to be relevant, credible sources (scholarly--imperative).
- ★ Avoid summarizing an article/source; make sure you don't fail to engage the source with meaningful analysis, synthesis between sources, and commentary.
- ★ Use the sources in conjunction with one another.

## Tips from AP Readers (Part 2)



- ★ Avoid “this source is credible because...” and use purposeful attributive phrasing instead.
- ★ Connect sources in agreement/disagreement with each other and establish this connection’s relevance to your overall thesis.
- ★ Must include multiple perspectives--start with the stakeholders (which groups or individuals have voices that would matter on this topic?).
- ★ Make sure you attribute to your sources using parenthetical references and matching works cited (this is the case for anything quoted OR paraphrased--this NEEDS to be proper, or you don’t get full credit).

# For Structure (Part 1)

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The structure of a literature review should include the following:

- ✓ An overview of the subject, issue, or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of the literature review,
- ✓ Division of works under review into themes or categories (e.g., works that support a particular position, those against, and those offering alternative approaches entirely),
- ✓ An explanation of how each work is similar to and how it varies from the others,
- ✓ Conclusions as to which pieces are best considered in their argument, are most convincing of their opinions and make the greatest contribution to the understanding and development of their area of research.

\*Courtesy of USC



## For Structure (Part 2)

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### The critical evaluation of each work should consider:

- ✓ **Provenance** -- what are the author's credentials? Are the author's arguments supported by evidence (e.g., primary historical material, case studies, narratives, statistics, recent scientific findings)?
- ✓ **Objectivity** -- is the author's perspective even-handed or prejudicial? Is contrary data considered, or is certain pertinent information ignored to prove the author's point?
- ✓ **Persuasiveness** -- which of the author's theses are most/least convincing?
- ✓ **Value** -- are the author's arguments and conclusions convincing? Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject?

\*Courtesy of USC



# Organization Templates

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- Chronology of Events
- Publication Trends
- Thematic (Conceptual Categories)
- Methodological

\*The following descriptions are courtesy of the University of Alabama's Libraries Research Guide, adapted from the materials cited previously from USC..

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# Organizing by Chronology of Events

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If your review follows the chronological method, you could write about the materials according to when they were published.



This approach should only be followed if a clear path of research building on previous research can be identified, and these trends follow a clear chronological order of development.



For example, a literature review that focuses on continuing research about the emergence of German economic power after the fall of the Soviet Union.

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# Organizing by Publication of Trends

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Order your sources by publication chronology only if the order demonstrates a more important trend.



For instance, you could order a review of literature on environmental studies of brown fields if the progression revealed, for example, a change in the soil collection practices of the researchers who wrote and/or conducted the studies.

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# Organizing by Theme

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Organized around a topic or issue rather than the progression of time. However, the progression of time may still be an important factor in a thematic review.



For example, a review of the Internet's impact on American presidential politics could focus on the development of online political satire. While the study focuses on one topic, the Internet's impact on American presidential politics, it will still be organized chronologically, reflecting technological developments in media.



The only difference here between a "chronological" and a "thematic" approach is what is emphasized the most: the role of the Internet in presidential politics.



However, more authentic thematic reviews tend to break away from chronological order. A review organized this way would shift between time periods within each section according to the point made.

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# Organizing by Method

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A methodological approach focuses on the methods utilized by the researcher.



For the Internet in American presidential politics project, one methodological approach would be to look at cultural differences between the portrayal of American presidents on American, British, and French websites.



Or the review might focus on the fundraising impact of the Internet on a particular political party.



A methodological scope will influence either the types of documents in the review or the way in which these documents are discussed.

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## Some Considerations (Part 1)

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Critical review only includes pertinent literature.

- How do you decide this? By reading all the literature—which ones are most consistently relevant to your question? Which are most consistently relevant to each other? Pick those.
- This is more than just a list of ‘all the things I read.’

Quotations should not dominate, but rather show:

- Justifications of an analytic claim you’re making concerning various pieces of literature
- Allow for comparisons between/with the literature.
- Express something better than you can do yourself.
- Demonstrate familiarity with important terminology/concepts in the field.
- NOT: to ‘impress,’ to ‘mischaracterize’ the literature, substitute for your thoughts, ‘namedrop’

As you read, search out “categories”.

- This way, you can comment on the categories and the way in which various pieces of literature have addressed those ‘categories’ in relation to each other (compare/contrast).
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# Potential Sections of the Report

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Once you've decided on the organizational method for your literature review, the sections you need to include in the paper should be easy to figure out because they arise from your organizational strategy.



In other words, a chronological review would have subsections for each vital time period; a thematic review would have subtopics based on factors related to the theme or issue.



However, sometimes you may need to add additional sections that are necessary for your study but do not fit into the organizational strategy of the body.



What other sections you include in the body is up to you but only include what is necessary for the reader to locate your study within the larger scholarship framework.

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# Potential Sections of the Report (Examples)

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- **Current Situation:** information necessary to understand the topic or focus of the literature review.
  - **History:** the chronological progression of the field, the literature, or an idea that is necessary to understand the literature review, if the body of the literature review is not already a chronology.
  - **Selection Methods:** the criteria you used to select (and perhaps exclude) sources in your literature review. For instance, you might explain that your review includes only peer-reviewed articles and journals.
  - **Standards:** the way in which you present your information.
  - **Questions for Further Research:** What questions about the field has the review sparked? How will you further your research as a result of the review?
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