

Step #1 -- Go Online and search your topic area for SCHOLARLY studies and commentaries.

Commentaries in scholarly journals are very helpful because they outline the current debate and issue for you. A scholarly study is a published article in a peer review journal. If the peers in a field have approved it, it should be worthy of your consideration. Try to find the most recent or current articles that pertain to your topic. It is suggested that your articles be no more than two years old. Why? Well, first it will point you in the right direction of the current thought on the subject. Second, you can use their reference list as a source to find other articles on the subject that can help you in your search. You must read the article; synopsis or abstracts will not do. There are no short cuts. You should not quote an article if you did not read it. If you need help navigating the Online Library, contact the librarian. How many articles do you need? It depends on the topic and the amount of research that has been done. Let's say that you are interested in female representation on board of directors, and does that make a difference in the way those companies operate? One recent article had 33 articles in its reference list that could help you on this issue (Bernardi, Bosco, & Vassill, 2006).

Step #2 -- Organize the articles. This is a must. There are three different ways to organize the articles; common themes, ideas, findings of research. This is called ***synthesized coherence***. By bringing together these studies from different areas you CREATE something new to say. The combination is new. Your literature review then is a discussion of the themes and ideas that these studies share and how your research idea furthers or advances these themes.

Another way to examine the literature is called ***progressive coherence***. Here you will organize the studies based on your observation that they are not focused enough to answer what you will address in your proposed study. Or there is too little research in the area and that your proposed study will add to the body of knowledge. Again, you CREATE something new to say. Telling your reader what others said is insufficient ... what do YOU think?

Finally, there is ***non-coherence***. Here you have collected studies that examined the same phenomenon and made certain conclusions; but you disagree with their approach to the problem, conclusions, pointing out the validity and reliability weaknesses. This critical thinking creates some interesting proposals and research