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Guidelines for Writing a Literature Review: Steps 1-4: *Finding Research*

Note: The following guidelines are modeled after the similarly titled [guidelines by Dr. Helen Mongan-Rallis](#). Both forms are based on [Galvan's \(2006\) text](#), and **sections of this guide have been quoted directly or with only minor revision from both sources.**

Step 1: *Decide on a Topic*

You may write your literature review on a topic of your choice, ideally related to student achievement. It is common to revise, or even change, your topic after searching for literature.

Step 2: *Learn to Use ERIC.*

Search online databases, such as ERIC and Academic Search Premiere, for literature on your topic. [Here is a link](#) to information on using ERIC to locate research. Both databases contain links to a variety of information. However, not all of it is peer-reviewed. [Here](#) is a quick guide to telling the difference. One quick note on ERIC: You may not always have access to the full text of articles you find. In most cases, however, libraries can [help](#) you get you electronic copies.

Step 3: *Identify the Literature to Review.*

You may also search for literature sources using [Google Scholar](#) and [FindArticles](#), though you must ensure that the articles you find are from peer-reviewed, academic journals. Here are some tips for identifying suitable literature and narrowing your search:

1. Start with a general descriptor from the database thesaurus or one that you know is already a well defined descriptor based on your prior knowledge of the field. You will need to experiment with different searches, such as limiting your search to descriptors that appear only in the document titles, or in both the document title and in the abstract.
2. Redefine your topic if needed. As you search you will quickly learn if the topic that you are reviewing is too broad. Try to narrow it to a specific area of interest within the broad area that you have chosen (remember: this is only an **introductory** literature review).
3. As part of your search, be sure to identify landmark or classic studies and theorists as these provide you with a framework/context for your study.

Step 4: *Develop and Track a Search Strategy.*

When searching for literature, it is imperative to develop and track a search strategy. The following link is to an example of a helpful [search strategy worksheet](#).