

## Helfield's Approach to Writing a Literature Review Paper (Tried and true since 1989)

1. Have an idea.
2. Develop your idea into a thesis (i.e., a proposition or assertion that can be supported or rebutted by evidence within the context of a logical argument).
3. Create an outline for your paper with numbered sections. The more detailed the outline the better. Your numbered sections should include the following:
  - a. *Introduction*: This should consist of background concepts or points leading to the development of your thesis
  - b. *Main Body*: This should consist of several sub-sections representing lines of evidence in support of (or in opposition to) your thesis.
  - c. *Conclusion*: This should be an acceptance or rejection of your thesis, as supported by the evidence presented in your main body.
4. Search the literature and read as many papers as you can that look like they might be relevant to your topic. NB: Peer-reviewed sources are always best.
5. Take notes on the papers you read, writing down only those parts that are relevant to your thesis.
6. Revise your outline according to any new ideas or findings you might come across in the literature.
7. For each of the ideas or findings in your notes, assign a number that corresponds to the appropriate section in your outline.
8. Cut and paste your notes, grouping all of your note fragments according to section number.
9. Use your newly-organized note fragments to write a rough draught for each section. Use your analytical skills to link the disparate ideas and findings from your note fragments. The best papers synthesize rather than merely summarizing ideas and findings from previous studies. A sample paragraph might look like this:
  - *Although it has been proposed that a tree falling in the woods does not make a sound if no one is there to hear it (Berkeley 1710), use of remote-controlled sound recording devices have demonstrated the opposite (Jones 2001). Nonetheless, Helfield et al. (2005) suggest that, from a philosophical perspective, the use of such recording devices serves as a surrogate for being in the woods to hear the tree fall. Accordingly, evidence thus obtained may be insufficient to refute Berkeley's (1710) theory.*
10. Put the rough draughts of all the sections together in order to form a rough draught of your entire paper.
11. Read through the rough draught, eliminating redundancies and making sure the sections follow logically from one to the next. Make sure also that your conclusions are supported by the evidence presented in the main body.
12. Revise and polish as necessary.