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Developing Your Research and Literature Review

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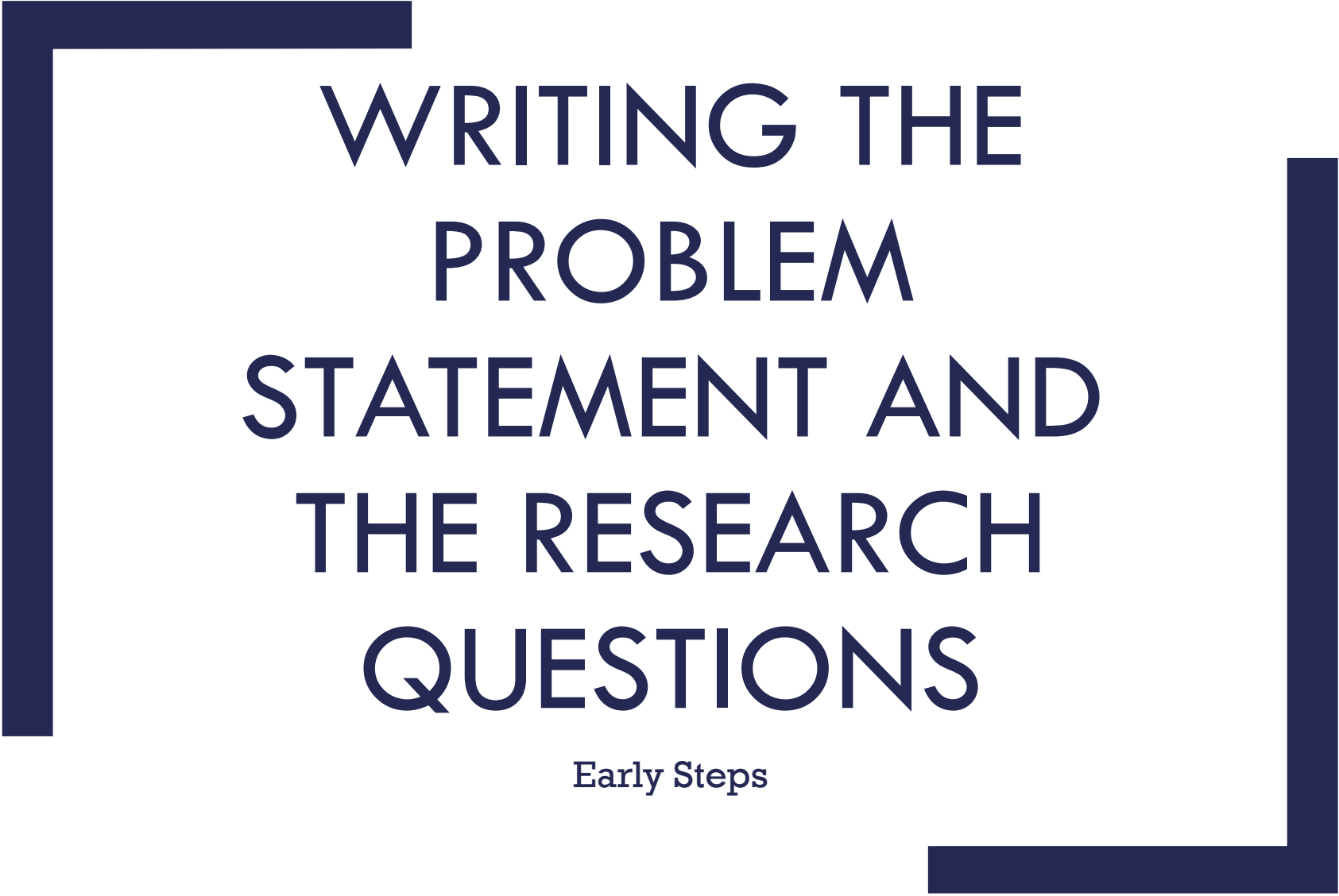
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DEVELOPING YOUR RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

By

Richard Cleveland and Lucas Jensen

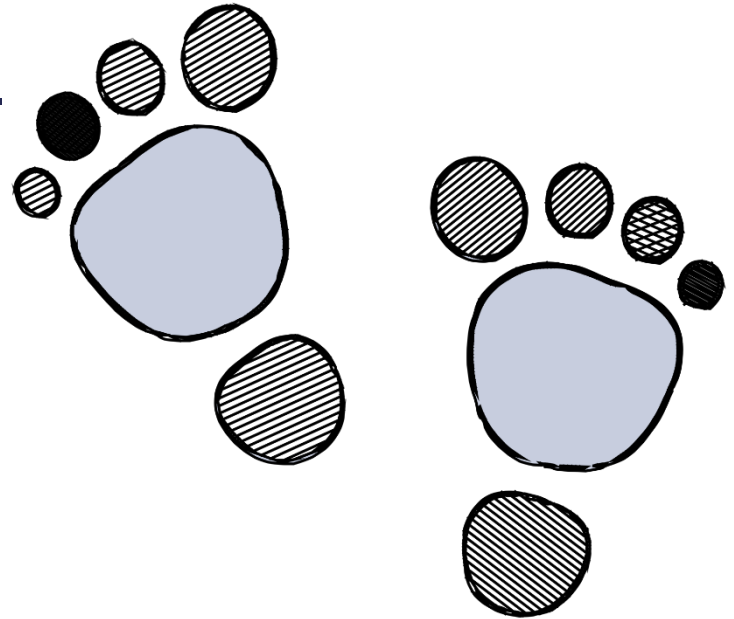


WRITING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Early Steps

Deciding what to study

- **General Considerations**
 - Meet, talk, etc. with your advisor.
 - Start thinking about it early.
 - As you progress in the program, narrow your focus.
 - Choose the right people for your committee.



Deciding what to study

- While selecting a problem/topic/issue
 - Is it researchable?
 - Do you know anything about it? (Being interested is not sufficient)
 - But passionate. [When we talked about having an opinion/passion]
 - Can you have access to data?
 - Can you complete the study in a reasonable amount of time?
 - Is there someone who can direct the study?



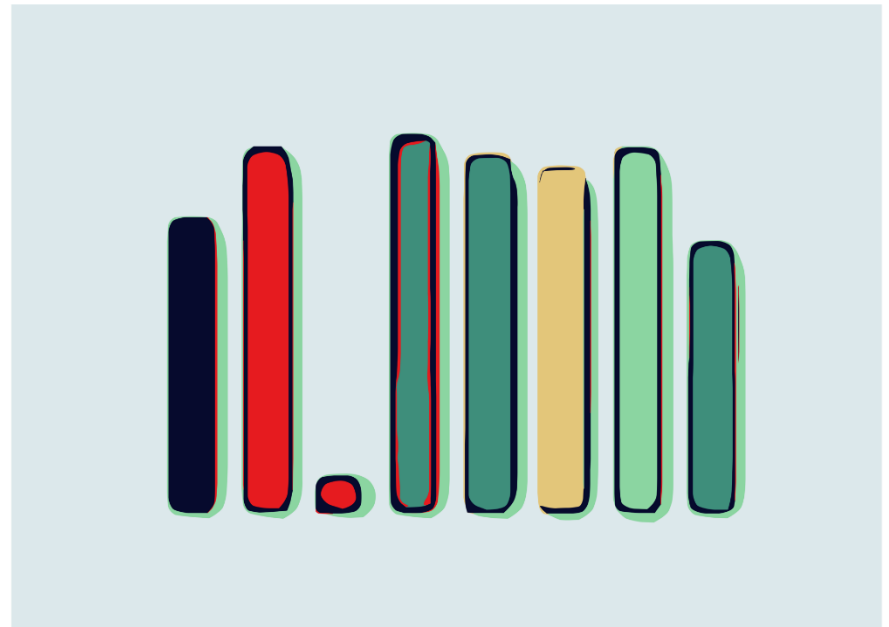
Once you have decided on a topic...

- Is there a justification for the study?
- Is gap in the literature a reasonable justification?
- Will you add anything to the field?
- Can you write a problem statement?



Problem statement

- What is the problem you are investigating?
- What causes the problem?
- Who are impacted by the problem?
- What has been done/investigated about the problem?
- What are you going to investigate about the problem?



Problem statement and RQs

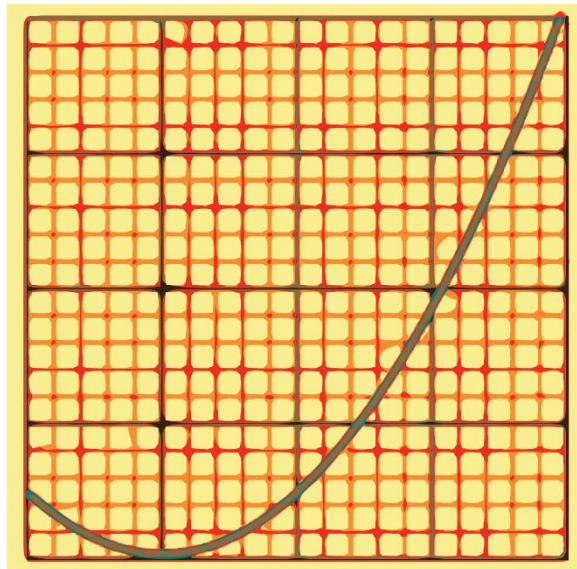
The answers to the questions in the previous slide will lead to research questions.

Problem Statement

- Let's practice
 - *What do you want to study?*
 - *What is the problem?*
 - *Causes?*
 - *Who is impacted?*
 - *What aspect of the problem will you study?*
 - *What are your research questions?*

Practical note

- Do not start with a “*qualitative or quantitative*” mindset.
- Your problem and the related RQs will determine your research paradigm.



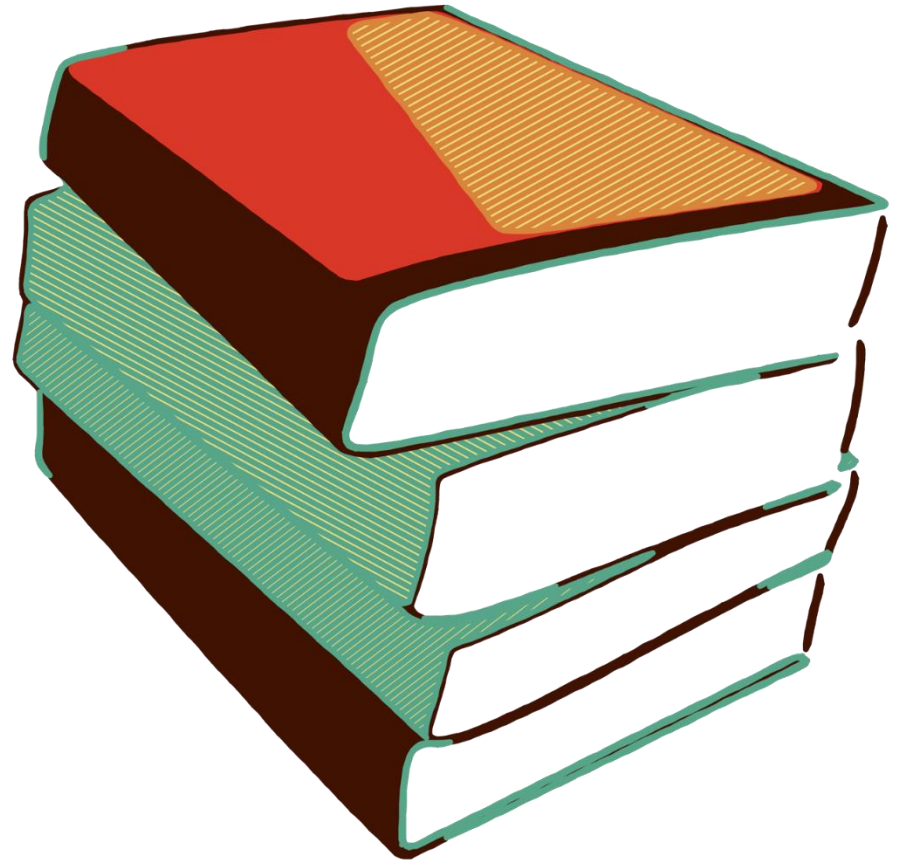


WRITING THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2

What it is and what it is not

- **It is**—*a critical examination of literature on a given topic.*
- **It is not**—*a list of short summaries of studies conducted on a given topic. Not a bibliography.*

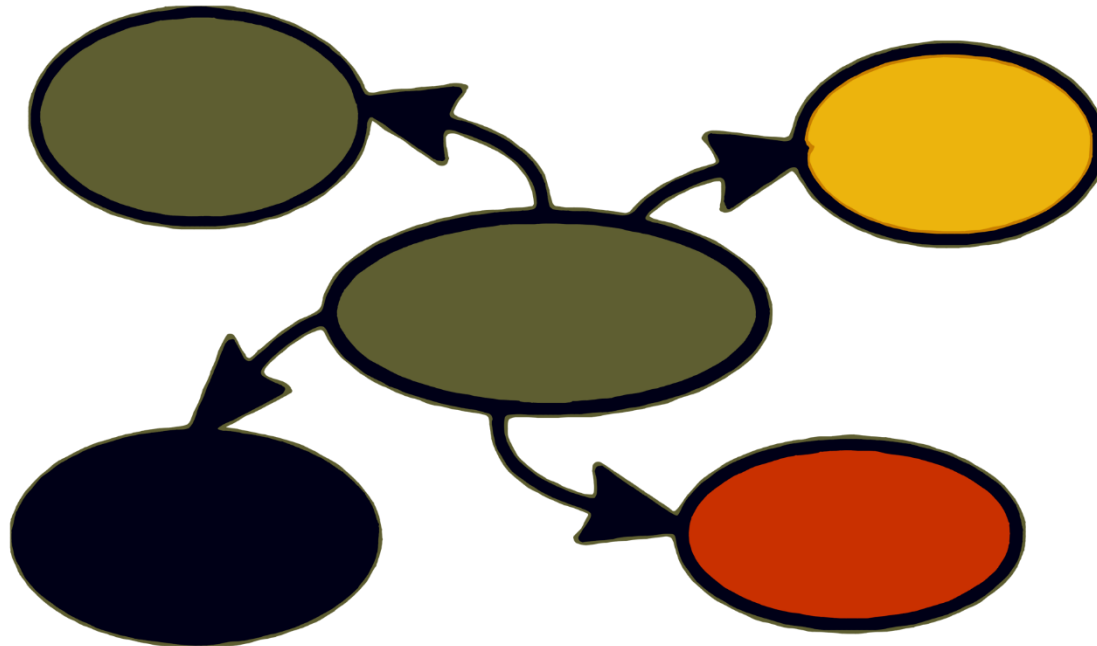


Recommended Steps

- You have a problem/topic
- Outline what to include in the lit review
- Search for literature
- Evaluate and interpret literature
- Synthesize literature
- Write your paper: outline, write the drafts, edit, proof-read, finalize

Outline

- Brainstorm
- Look for connections
- Include all major concepts/variables related to the study.



Searching for literature

- Electronic databases are available and you can obtain full-text articles
- Use the search function of the databases wisely to avoid getting thousands of studies in the search results.
- Search for seminal studies. Once you have read a few studies on the topic, you will have an idea about seminal studies.

Searching for literature

- Find recent literature, recognizing different disciplines may have differing parameters.
- Peer-reviewed (refereed) studies are more credible than others, so search for those.
- If you try to obtain information from Internet sites, use sites with the extensions: .gov and .edu – once again here, parameters may change dependent upon discipline, subject, etc.

Searching for literature

- Quick tip: After you have read a few studies on the topic, use their reference pages to find further studies.
- *Pearl* articles.
- Keep a running commentary (digital, analog, annotated bib, etc.) of your searching, search results, thoughts, etc.

Evaluate and interpret literature

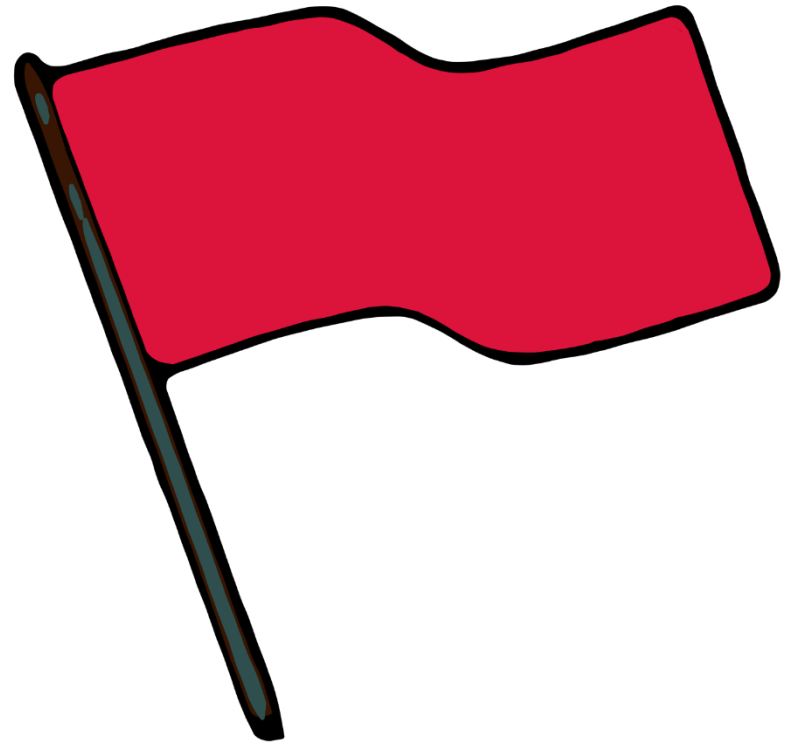
- Before you begin writing your paper, you need to have read an adequate number of studies to have a good handle on the topic.
- As you evaluate and interpret literature, search for more literature to answer questions you have developed as a result of reading the literature you have read.

Evaluate and interpret literature

- Look for arguments and counter-arguments in the literature to obtain a holistic view of the topic.
- Read qualitative and quantitative studies differently: quantitative research tries to achieve generalizable results whereas qualitative research tries to give a detailed picture of the studied phenomenon.

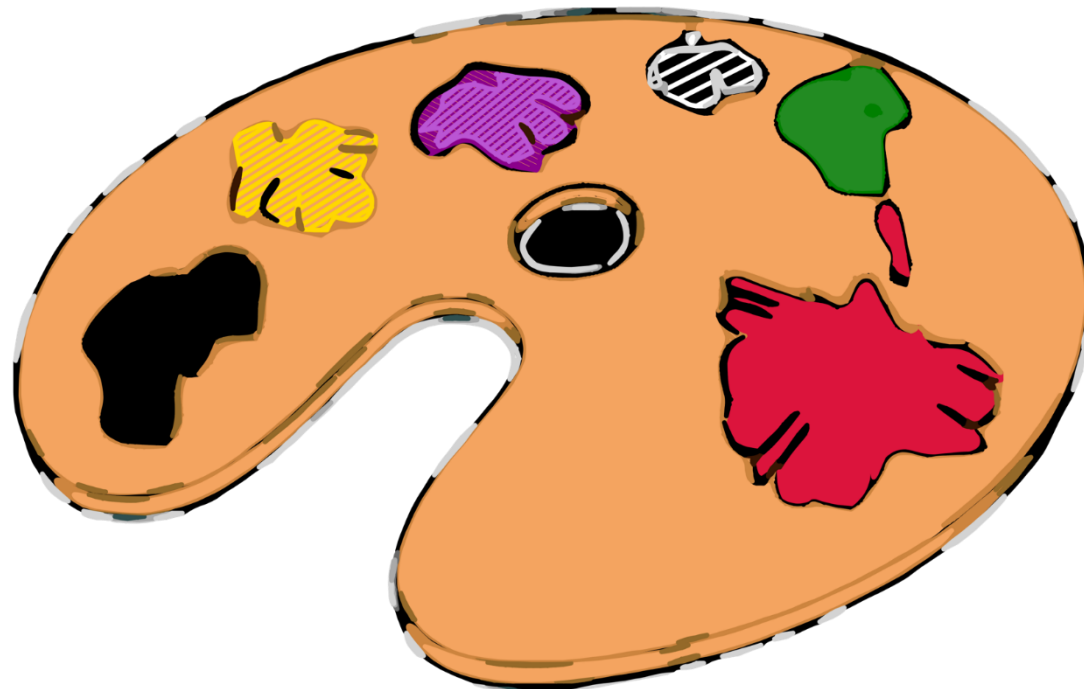
Evaluate and interpret literature

- As you read the research literature, always ask yourself if the study described in the article is a sound study (be a critical consumer of knowledge)
- When you find errors or gaps common in many studies you reviewed, make a note of those errors and gaps, and use this knowledge in your interpretation.



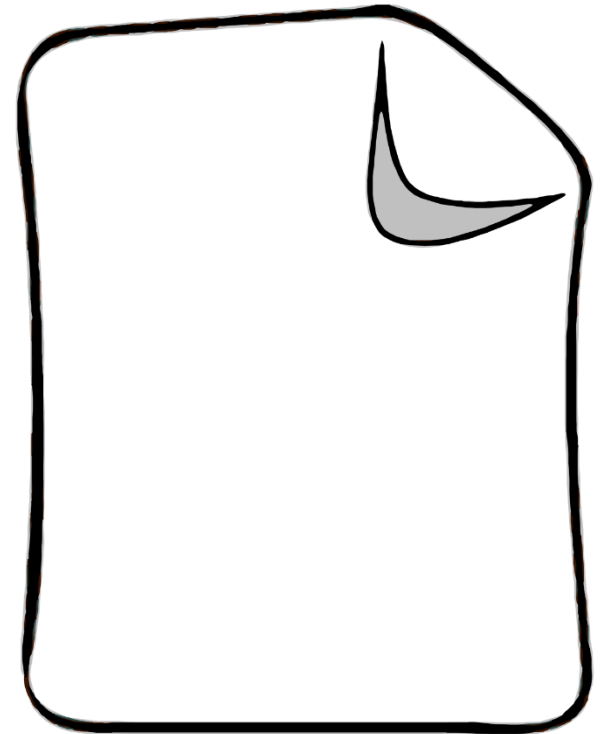
Synthesize literature

- Organize what you have found in the literature into a logical structure (e.g., theme, evolution of the topic, chronologically, etc.).
- Present both sides of the issue: agreements, disagreements, arguments, counter-arguments



Write the paper

- First outline the chapter (initial outline can be helpful here)
- If you are having the “blank page syndrome,” stop thinking for a minute and start typing without thinking. Once you have a paragraph or so typed, then you have something to work on and the page is not blank anymore.



Write the paper

- As in any paper, you need to have an introduction, development, and conclusion
 - **Introduction:** Establish the purpose, briefly introduce the topic.
 - **Development:** Present the literature you reviewed in a logical manner, integrate data you have collected from online sources
 - **Conclusion:** Recap major patterns in the literature, identify the gaps, and briefly discuss what the literature suggests overall.

Write the paper

- It is very important that you cite all resources you use in the text (Check APA manual for instructions).
- When you make important (or strong) points, try to cite more than one study.
- Do not come to generalizations based on one or two studies.
- Avoid numerous and long quotes. It is best to paraphrase and cite your source; and cite PRIMARY sources.

Write the paper

- Organize your writing using main headings and subheadings.
- Use correct grammar.
- When citing research literature, use past tense as the study was conducted in the past
- When citing theory, or generalizations from other studies, it may be appropriate to use present tense.
- Pay attention to parallel structure in your writing.

Write the paper

- Read what you have written, make revisions as needed. First draft is never the final draft, second draft is almost never the final draft, third draft is coming close to the end.
- Have a colleague or a family member read your paper (We see what we want to see in the paper, others can see what is and is not actually in the paper). If someone outside the discipline (e.g., family/friend) can read/understand then encouraging.

Write the paper

- Do not forget to include a reference page with all the resources listed in an alphabetical order (Check APA 6th ed.)

