

How to Complete a Literature Review for Your Dissertation

It's always so much fun writing a dissertation isn't it?! Completing an essay is difficult enough, but a dissertation is a much bigger beast, because the structure required of the dissertation and the level of content needed to fill the dissertation is much grander.

A dissertation is generally made up of the following elements (although they may be titled slightly differently):

- An introduction
- An abstract, which lets the reader know in summary what the dissertation is going to explore and why
- A literature review
- An analysis of the evidence in both support of and against the argument you are presenting
- A conclusion
- Footnotes or endnotes
- Bibliography

An important element of a dissertation is therefore the literature review. This is also the section of the dissertation that most individuals struggle with.

A literature review is the section of the dissertation where you present all of the important bits of information that you have gathered that relate to your chosen subject, or to the argument that you are assessing throughout the dissertation. Each element of literature should be presented to the reader in a logical way. The best way to do this is to establish a general argument for the section of the dissertation, and allow the evidence to help 'tell' the reader the argument. For example, if your chosen dissertation subject is to 'explore the pros and cons of animal testing' then you would present the information that you have gathered as 'arguments from others that are in support of animal testing', and then 'arguments from others that are anti animal testing.' Similarly, if the dissertation question was, 'why did Churchill lose power after the war', you'd group together the key argument themes that others have presented, and then state them all one-by-one within the literature review.

Getting together the information that you need to present in the literature is your next step. Without this, you'll have no content for your literature review!

So, how do you gather information to fill up your literature review? There are lots of different ways to gather information - it all depends upon your preferences. Below are some ideas to help you with your information gathering. Have a go at some of them and see which methodology suits you best:

- Head to the library and go through text books or reference books that are related to your subject. Whenever you find a section or a quotation that is relevant to your dissertation subject matter, make a note of it in your notepad.
- Alternatively you could go to the library and riffle through the text books until you find a section or a quotation that is relevant to your dissertation subject matter. Once located, photocopy the page(s) and highlight the required section on your photocopy. Keep all photocopied sheets together in a folder, ordered in a logical way

- Surf the internet for important piece of information that can help inform your dissertation question, argument or subject matter. As you find relevant information, write it down or print off the page. Importantly, ensure that you know who the information belongs to (who initially stated it) so that you can allocate the argument or comment correctly in your literature review.

When your dissertation is completed and ready for its final review, have it proofread by the Words Worth Reading Ltd experts.