How Do I Do a Literature Review?
If you have chosen your topic yourself, you may have a good general knowledge of the subject area. If you are a professional social researcher who has been given the topic, then you need to start by building up your general knowledge.

Scholarship refers to organized critical overviews of the literature on the subject. These can be divided into four kinds, beginning with the most basic.

These are sometimes called tertiary literature, and provide a useful starting point. However, you should note that it's not usual to cite them in your review.

Overviews of the subject written by eminent scholars are more useful. You will always find something like this, either as a single-authored book, or in the editorial introduction/conclusion to a large collection on a given subject. Ask your supervisor for recommendations of the big books in your topic area if you don't already know what they are. You may cite these in your literature review.

These are particularly useful and take three forms.

- **Special issues of journals**: These are very valuable as sources. They contain sets of articles on a theme, usually with an introduction by the editor(s) which summarizes and considers the topic as a whole.
- **Edited collections**: These have more content and a wider remit than special issues of journals. They include examples of empirical work and overview articles by editors, as well as scholarly articles debating issues around a subject.
- **Edited multiple-volume collections of previously published material**: These draw lots of material together and have excellent scholarly introductions and overviews. You'll find these in your library.

These can be found through web searches.

In the final written version of your research it is likely that you will be required to include a chapter based on your literature review. The best way to organize this is **thematically**. Just as you identify themes when dealing with the findings of your research, you should find thematic sub-headings to discuss the literature you have read.

This will help you to conclude your chapter with a **set of questions** which emerge from the review and which will be addressed in your own research. Your literature review thus provides you with a **preliminary structure** for organizing your research findings.

**Search for resources about literature reviews**

**Read more about writing up a literature review**