

# How to Cite a Literature Review: Complete Academic Guide

## Quick Answer:

- Citing a literature review depends on the citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.).
- If citing the review itself, treat it like a journal article or paper.
- If citing sources within a literature review, cite the original sources — not just the review.
- Always include author, year, title, and publication details.
- Avoid secondary citations unless absolutely necessary.
- Use reference managers or citation tools for accuracy.

## SERP Analysis: What Competitors Cover (and Miss)

Most top-ranking pages for “how to cite a literature review” follow a similar pattern. They primarily present step-by-step instructions, focusing on citation formats like APA, MLA, and Chicago. Common subheadings include “What is a Literature Review,” “How to Cite Sources,” and “Examples of Citations.”

Competitors tend to answer questions such as:

- How do you cite a literature review in APA?
- Do you cite the review or original sources?
- What is a secondary citation?

The format is usually a basic guide or checklist. However, there are noticeable gaps. Most articles fail to explain **why citation rules work the way they do**, how citation decisions affect academic credibility, and what mistakes actually cost students marks.

Another weak point is the lack of practical scenarios. Few articles show real-world examples of citing multiple studies within a literature review or explain complex cases like systematic reviews or meta-analyses.

This guide closes those gaps by focusing on deeper understanding, real examples, and decision-making logic — not just formatting rules.

## SEO Structure & Keyword Clustering

### Primary Keyword

how to cite a literature review

### Secondary Keywords

- cite literature review APA
- how to reference literature review
- citation in literature review example
- secondary citation academic writing
- how to cite sources in literature review

## Content Structure

- Introduction
- What Is a Literature Review
- How Citation Works in Literature Reviews
- Step-by-Step Citation Guide
- Examples in APA, MLA, Chicago
- REAL VALUE BLOCK (EEAT)
- Common Mistakes
- What Others Don't Tell You
- Practical Tips
- Buyer Guide (Help & Tools)
- FAQ

## Introduction

Understanding how to cite a literature review is one of the most confusing parts of academic writing. Many students assume it's just about formatting references correctly, but in reality, citation in literature reviews is more about demonstrating critical thinking and research depth than simply following rules.

A literature review is not just a summary of sources. It is a structured analysis of existing research, where each citation serves a purpose: supporting an argument, showing trends, identifying gaps, or comparing findings. This makes citation practices in literature reviews more complex than in standard essays.

Another layer of confusion comes from the distinction between citing the literature review itself and citing the sources within it. Students often make the mistake of referencing only the review, ignoring the original studies, which weakens academic credibility.

In addition, different citation styles (APA, MLA, Chicago) have specific requirements that can significantly affect how references are presented. Without a clear understanding of how these systems work, it's easy to lose marks or even risk plagiarism issues.

This guide breaks everything down into clear, practical steps. You'll learn not only how to cite correctly but also how citation works at a deeper level, what matters most in academic evaluation, and how to avoid common pitfalls.

Need help structuring or citing your literature review correctly?

[Get Expert Writing Help](#)

# What Is a Literature Review?

A literature review is a critical analysis of existing research on a specific topic. It identifies patterns, debates, gaps, and trends in the academic conversation. Unlike a simple summary, it requires synthesis — connecting multiple sources into a coherent narrative.

Because of this, citation plays a central role. Each reference is not just proof of reading but a building block in your argument.

## How Citation Works in Literature Reviews

Citation in a literature review operates on two levels:

- **Direct citation:** Referencing specific studies to support a point.
- **Synthesis citation:** Grouping multiple sources to show trends or consensus.

For example:

*Several studies have found a strong correlation between sleep and cognitive performance (Smith, 2020; Lee, 2019; Brown, 2021).*

This demonstrates synthesis rather than isolated citation.

## Step-by-Step: How to Cite a Literature Review

### Step 1: Identify What You Are Citing

Are you citing the review itself or sources within it? This determines your approach.

### Step 2: Use the Correct Style

Follow your required citation format strictly (APA, MLA, Chicago).

### Step 3: Prioritize Original Sources

Whenever possible, cite the original research instead of relying on secondary citations.

### Step 4: Use Consistent Formatting

Ensure all references follow the same structure throughout the document.

### Step 5: Build a Reference List

Include all cited sources in a properly formatted bibliography or reference list.

## Examples (APA Style)

Type	Example
Journal Article	Smith, J. (2020). Title of article. Journal Name, 10(2), 123-135.
Book	Brown, L. (2019). Title of book. Publisher.

## REAL VALUE BLOCK: What Actually Matters

This is where most students go wrong. Citation is not about formatting — it's about demonstrating understanding.

### How the System Works

Academic writing is based on traceability. Every claim must be linked to evidence. Citations allow readers to verify your sources and evaluate your argument.

### Key Decision Factors

- Relevance of source
- Credibility of author
- Recency of research
- Context of citation

### Common Mistakes

- Overusing secondary citations
- Citing irrelevant sources
- Inconsistent formatting
- Missing references

### What Actually Matters (Priority Order)

1. Accuracy of source
2. Relevance to argument
3. Proper integration into text
4. Correct formatting

## What Others Don't Tell You

Most guides ignore the strategic side of citation. Strong literature reviews don't just list sources — they position them.

- Use citations to show disagreement, not just agreement.
- Highlight gaps in research explicitly.
- Group sources by theme, not by author.

## Practical Tips

- Use reference managers to avoid errors.
- Double-check formatting before submission.
- Always read original sources when possible.
- Keep track of sources during research.

## Buyer Guide: Getting Help with Literature Review Citation

Writing and citing a literature review can quickly become overwhelming, especially when dealing with dozens of sources, strict formatting rules, and tight deadlines. This is where external help can make a meaningful difference — but only if you approach it strategically.

First, it's important to understand what kind of help you actually need. Many students assume they need someone to “write everything,” but often the real need is more specific: structuring citations correctly, checking formatting consistency, or improving synthesis between sources.

There are generally three types of support available:

- **Editing and proofreading:** Ideal if your review is written but needs polishing and citation correction.
- **Formatting assistance:** Useful for ensuring compliance with APA, MLA, or Chicago styles.
- **Full writing support:** Suitable for complex or time-sensitive assignments.

When choosing a service or tool, focus on these decision factors:

### 1. Accuracy Over Speed

Fast delivery is tempting, but citation errors can cost grades. Prioritize accuracy and expertise.

### 2. Understanding of Academic Standards

The provider should clearly understand citation logic, not just formatting rules.

### 3. Transparency

Look for clear pricing, revision policies, and communication options.

### 4. Customization

Your literature review topic is unique. Avoid generic templates.

Another important consideration is ethical use. External help should support your learning process, not replace it entirely. Use it to improve clarity, fix errors, and strengthen your work.

If you're unsure where to start or need reliable assistance with citation, formatting, or structuring your literature review, you can request a tailored solution below.

Get personalized help with your literature review and citations

Request a Quote

Using expert help strategically can save time, reduce stress, and significantly improve the quality of your academic work — especially when dealing with complex citation requirements.

## FAQ

### 1. Should I cite the literature review or original sources?

You should cite original sources whenever possible. This strengthens credibility and shows deeper research. Relying only on a literature review is considered a secondary citation and is less authoritative.

### 2. What is a secondary citation?

A secondary citation occurs when you cite a source mentioned in another work instead of accessing the original. It should be used sparingly and only when the original source is unavailable.

### 3. How many citations should a literature review have?

There is no fixed number, but quality matters more than quantity. A strong literature review typically includes a balanced range of relevant and credible sources.

### 4. Can I use the same citation multiple times?

Yes, if it supports multiple points. However, avoid over-reliance on a single source.

### 5. What citation style should I use?

This depends on your institution or discipline. Always follow official guidelines provided by your instructor.

### 6. What happens if I cite incorrectly?

Incorrect citations can lead to loss of marks or even plagiarism issues. Always double-check formatting and accuracy.