

Literature Review Checklist

Anatomy & Physiology Class

This checklist is adapted from *Ten Simple Rules for Writing a Literature Review* (PMCID: PMC3715443) and guides you through the process of writing a clear, well-organized literature review.

Step 1: Pre-Writing Preparation

- Pick a topic related to anatomy or physiology (e.g., “How exercise affects heart health”).
- Ensure there are sufficient research articles (at least 5 credible sources).
- Write one main question your review will answer (e.g., “What are the effects of aerobic exercise on heart function in adults?”).

Step 2: Literature Search and Collection

- Use PubMed, Google Scholar, or library resources to search for studies.
- Use search terms like “exercise and heart health” or “effects of running on the cardiovascular system.”
- Read abstracts (summaries) to decide if each article is useful.
- Keep track of the title, author, date, and a few key points from each article.

Step 3: Critical Reading and Evaluation

- Read the full articles (or as much as you can).
- For each article, write:
 - What was the purpose of the study?
 - Who was studied (animals, humans, adults, children)?
 - What did they measure (heart rate, blood pressure, strength, etc.)?
 - What were the main results?
 - Did the study have any problems or weaknesses?

Step 4: Synthesis and Organization

- Group your articles by theme (e.g., “Exercise and blood pressure,” “Exercise and heart muscle changes”).
- Notice if studies agree or disagree with each other.
- Identify any gaps or unanswered questions in the research.

Step 5: Writing the Literature Review

1. Introduction

- What is the topic you are reviewing?
- Why is this topic important in anatomy or physiology?
- What question are you trying to answer?
- What is the goal of your paper? (What will your review show?)
 - Example:** “This paper reviews studies on how regular aerobic exercise affects heart health in adults.”

2. Methods

- Where did you search for articles (which databases)?
- What search terms did you use?
- How did you decide which articles to include or leave out?
- How many articles did you end up using?

3. Body Paragraphs (Results and Discussion)

- For each theme or group of articles:
 - What do most of the studies agree on?
 - Are there any important differences between the studies?
 - What do these studies teach us about the topic?
 - Did any study have interesting or surprising results?
 - Are there any weaknesses or problems with these studies (like small sample sizes or short time periods)?

4. Conclusion

- What are the main points you learned from reading the research?
- Did the research answer your original question?
- Is there anything researchers still don't know about this topic?
- What could future studies look at next?

5. References

- Did you properly list all the articles you used?
- Did you follow the required citation style (AMA or MLA)?

Literature Review Grading Checklist

Task	Points
Clear, focused topic and question	___ / 10
Uses at least 4 credible, science-based sources	___ / 10
Organized by themes with good comparisons	___ / 10
Shows clear understanding of main research findings	___ / 10
Conclusion summarizes what was learned and next steps	___ / 10
References are formatted correctly (AMA or MLA)	___ / 10
Total	___ / 60

Literature Review Grading Rubric

Category	9–10 Points (Excellent)	7–8 Points (Good)	5–6 Points (Needs Work)	0–4 Points (Incomplete/Poor)
Clear, focused topic and question	Topic is clear, focused, and directly connected to anatomy/physiology. Question guides the paper well.	Topic is mostly clear; question is stated but could be more specific.	Topic is vague or too broad; question lacks clarity.	Topic is missing or completely off-track. No guiding question.
Uses at least 4 credible, science-based sources	4+ credible sources used (journals, textbooks). All relevant and well-chosen.	4 sources used but may rely on some less reliable sources.	Fewer than 4 sources or includes unreliable/non-scientific sources.	Sources are missing, not credible, or mostly opinion-based.
Organized by themes with good comparisons	Information is grouped by themes, shows clear connections and comparisons.	Some attempt to group by themes with limited comparisons.	Little organization by theme; mostly summary without comparisons.	Paper is disorganized; no clear themes or comparisons.
Shows clear understanding of main research findings	Shows strong understanding; explains main findings accurately and thoughtfully.	Basic understanding with some minor errors or vague explanations.	Some misunderstandings or lack of depth in explanations.	Major misunderstandings or fails to explain main findings.
Conclusion summarizes what was learned and next steps	Strong conclusion that summarizes key takeaways and mentions future questions or gaps.	Adequate conclusion summarizing main points; limited mention of future steps.	Weak conclusion; misses main points or lacks summary of learning.	No conclusion or off-topic ending.
References formatted correctly (AMA or MLA)	All references properly formatted with no noticeable errors.	Few minor formatting errors.	Frequent formatting mistakes.	References missing or mostly incorrect.