# Plan on a page literature review

**ALL OF THESE DECISIONS SHOULD BE INFORMED BY THE STYLE OF REVIEW YOU ARE DOING. THE DECISIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME FOR DIFFERENT REVIEW DESIGNS.**

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| Background | In a thesis, most of the background will be in a separate chapter, prior to the review chapter. In a paper you write a background setting out why this review needs to be done: the importance of the area, the purpose of the review, and why a synthesis is helpful. Remember, you are not arguing for a 'gap' in the same way as for many empirical papers – if there isn't research in the area you can't review it! |
| Literature review question | Write your overarching LRQ. The wording of this should be congruent with your review design. Use of PICO, SPIDER or other question writing guides? |
| Purpose of review within the thesis | Gap identification? Methodological guide? Or …. Where does the review sit within my thesis? |
| Design of literature review | Name review style – e.g. realist review, meta-ethnography, narrative review, meta-analysis etc. Justification for this review design, related to your purpose and LRQ. |
| Inclusion and exclusion criteria | List of inclusion and exclusion criteria (type of research, setting, population of interest, outcomes of interest, etc ….). This often works well in a table. |
| Search terms | Overall search concepts and use of Boolean operators (AND/OR). Use of MeSH headings/key words and free text searches/truncation.<br><br>Append detailed search for at least one database (Medline suggested).<br><br>Use of existing search strings e.g. from Cochrane reviews, or published search strings e.g. Reitjens or the PALETTE method. |
| Databases | Name databases e.g. Medline, Cinnahl, Embase, PsychInfo etc. …<br>Grey literature search? Citation tracking/reference list searching? |
| Dates to be searched | Any start date? Why? |
| Quality appraisal | Is quality appraisal required? What form and its purpose – to weight review/to exclude studies? |
| Synthesis | Approach to analysis/synthesis. Any use of CAQDAS (NVivo, ATLAS etc) other software depending on style of review e.g. Revman for forest plots. |
| Search results | Capturing numbers for PRISMA diagram (search, title/abstract screening/full text review, de-duplication, reasons for exclusion)<br><br>Any use of software such as Endnote, COVIDENCE, RevMan etc.? |
| Table of included studies | Author, date, country; research question; design; setting; participants; data collection; findings; comments; quality score (see below). Adjust for purpose of review. |
| Summary of included study characteristics | Anything notable in terms of types of studies, geography etc. to note from the table? |
| Findings | Presentation of findings dependent on style of review |
| Discussion | Summary of main findings, interpretation of findings with reference to other literature, theory etc., strengths and limitations of the review, recommendations and conclusions. |
| Use reporting guideline | Follow a reporting guideline appropriate to your design of review – check Equator network. Examples include PRISMA , ENTREQ, RAMESES, EMERGE. |