

MAKING SOURCES TALK TO EACH OTHER IN A LITERATURE REVIEW

When you're writing the body of a literature review, you analyze and record how the different sources "talk to each other". Imagine several researchers having a conversation about your topic:



My study showed that fluoride toothpaste reduces cavities by 25%.

Mine too! But I found a 35% difference!



My study showed that it's the brushing part that prevents cavities, not the fluoride.

STRUCTURING YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS

It's important that you integrate both the authors' claims and your own evaluation of the conversation into your body paragraphs. Your own thoughts and analysis will be present throughout the paragraph, but are most noticeable at the beginning and end of the paragraph, like so:

1. CLAIM

2. EVIDENCE

**3. ANALYSIS &
CONCLUSION**

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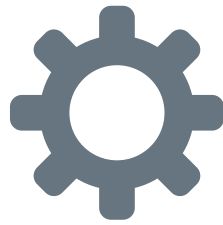
1. CLAIM

Make a claim about the research that describes a trend or pattern you've noticed when reading various sources. For example:

"Much of the literature since 2010 focuses on the relationship between brushing your teeth and the prevalence of cavities."

Here are some other examples of ways to make a claim about the state of research:

- The academic literature on X has revealed the emergence of several contrasting themes.
- A number of authors have examined the consequences of...
- Previous research has established that...



2. EVIDENCE

Offer evidence of your claim by showing various perspectives of the topic.

Use reporting verbs and transitions to describe the relationships between studies. Include how research "talks to each other." For example:

*"**Author A and B maintain** that brushing your teeth with fluoride toothpaste prevents cavities. **In their most recent studies**, they respectively found a 25% and 35% decrease in tooth decay when subjects used fluoride toothpaste. **Author C agrees** that brushing is important, **but cautions** that it might not be fluoride that is important to reduce cavities. **C's study found** that levels of decay decreased in patients who used fluoride toothpaste as well as those who brushed with non-fluoride toothpaste."*

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Verbs to describe a source's writing:
argues, claims, suggests,
maintains, concludes, points out,
offers, proposes, suggests,
argues for

Transition phrases to show relationships between sources:
likewise, in contrast, also, but,
yet, equally, whereas, in contrast,
unlike, in particular, overall

3. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Add your own analysis and conclusion. It's your job to assess what all the different viewpoints mean collectively:

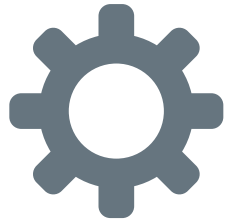
- How does the evidence fit together?
- Where is there a general consensus?
- What are the controversies and discrepancies?
- Are there one or two dissenting voices with some new information?

When you analyze the sources in this way, you're thinking critically to assess the research overall. This requires critical thought on your part. Finish your paragraph by drawing a conclusion about the state of scholarship in your own words.

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CONCLUSION VOCABULARY:



All studies reviewed here support the hypothesis that...

Two important themes that emerged from the studies discussed are...

These studies clearly indicate that there is a relationship between...



A sample concluding statement might look something like this:

"Together, these studies indicate that brushing your teeth is important to prevent tooth decay, but the discrepancy in findings highlights the need for more study to determine whether it is the fluoride or the brushing itself that is the main mechanism to stop cavities."

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Here is an example of a completed lit review body paragraph. The highlighted parts show how the author has made their sources talk to each other:

"Most researchers agree that patient autonomy is a critical element in promoting long-term health of patients in nursing homes. Autonomy allows patients to have some level of control over their surrounding environment, which is directly correlated to better health outcomes (French 1998, Shoag 2017, Haroon 2000, Hope 2002). However, recommendations differ on what strategies are needed to promote autonomy. Shoag (2017) identified that patients need privacy, especially private rooms to feel autonomous. Conversely, French (1998) and Haroon (2000) found that a nursing home resident's autonomy is reliant on more than just having their own room. They determined instead that being able to control the environment, such as being able to regulate the heat in their room or possessing a key to the lock increased nursing home residents' feelings of independence and resulted in much higher perceptions of autonomy. Hope (2002), substantiates these claims and further asserts that characteristics of the institutional environment also have an impact. Her research shows that residents have indicated that the location of the facility and the extent of resources available to them are very important features that affect their sense of independence. The theme emerging from the literature overall suggests that it is important to provide some level of autonomy to both the residents' physical environment and the structures within that environment. However, how a nursing home provides resident self-control should, and will, vary depending on the nursing home and/or the individual resident."