# Organizing Your Research: The Outline Approach

## Introduction Literature reviews require introductions, just like other types of written work. By filling in the information below, you should have a good, basic outline of an introduction.

## What is your research question?

(For help with this step, see the [Develop and Narrow a Topic](https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-and-communication-centre/sites/ca.writing-and-communication-centre/files/uploads/files/narrow_your_topic.pdf) handout.)

## Identify key definitions or theories you might need to explain in order for your audience to understand the rest of your literature review:

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## Why is this topic important? (Write a few notes below.)

## Organizing your Information

In this section, you want to identify the important ideas from your sources and identify points of commonality and difference. For more information, see the Making Sources Talk to Each Other

1. **Key Theme 1**
   1. Idea(s) from source 1 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   2. Idea(s) from source 2 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   3. Idea(s) from source 3 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   4. Idea(s) from source 4 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   5. Where do these sources agree and disagree?
2. **Key Theme 2**
   1. Idea(s) from source 1 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   2. Idea(s) from source 2 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   3. Idea(s) from source 3 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   4. Idea(s) from source 4 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   5. Where do these sources agree and disagree?
3. **Key Theme 3**
   1. Idea(s) from source 1 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   2. Idea(s) from source 2 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   3. Idea(s) from source 3 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   4. Idea(s) from source 4 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   5. Where do these sources agree and disagree?
4. **Key Theme 4 (if needed)**
   1. Idea(s) from source 1 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   2. Idea(s) from source 2 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   3. Idea(s) from source 3 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   4. Idea(s) from source 4 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   5. Where do these sources agree and disagree?
5. **Key Theme 5 (if needed)**
   1. Idea(s) from source 1 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   2. Idea(s) from source 2 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   3. Idea(s) from source 3 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   4. Idea(s) from source 4 and notes on how they relate to your other sources
   5. Where do these sources agree and disagree?

## Conclusion Literature reviews require conclusions, just like other types of written work. By filling in the information below, you should have a good, basic outline of a conclusion.

## What are the important aspects of the body of literature you reviewed?

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## Where does the current knowledge stand? Are there important or significant gaps you identified?

## What are some areas for future study?

## Bringing it Together: See Developing a Thesis for the Literature Review. Note that your thesis will appear at the end of the introduction, but often must be developed or refined after completing the majority of the work on the literature review.