* A literature review is a comprehensive examination of the information and knowledge base related to a given research topic.
* A systematic review of the literature can provide numerous benefits to a researcher beginning a study—for example, in refining the topic and making decisions regarding methodology.
* Researchers must always be cognizant of the quality of the literature they choose to include in a review.
* Empirical research studies are based on the collection of original data. They are not inherently better, but typically more rigorous than opinion-type articles and documents.
* Articles that have gone through a peer-review process prior to publication in a journal are called refereed manuscripts.
* Literature reviews should be as objective as possible, presenting all sides of a body of research.
* The research studies reviewed should be timely within the context of the topic.
* The adequate amount of research to review often varies by topic.
  + When you begin to read the same major contributors in the field, you can be confident that you have not missed any important studies.
* Sources for literature are classified as primary sources and secondary sources.
  + Primary sources are firsthand accounts of original research.
  + Secondary sources do not consist of original research, but are summaries, compilations, or interpretations of primary research conducted by other individuals.
  + Literature reviews should focus on primary sources.
* Primary sources are typically found by searching specialized databases, such as ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar.
* The searchable ERIC online database contains more than 1.4 million citations, 400,000 of which are available in full-text format.
* The ERIC database of educational research consists of two indexes—one that contains citation information and abstracts of published journal articles and another that cites and abstracts documents not published in journals, such as papers presented at conferences, technical reports, evaluation reports of grants, and reports of other original research.
* The primary method for searching the ERIC database is by keywords or descriptors, although searches can be done by author name as well.
* Searches can be narrowed or broadened with Boolean operators.
  + Using *and* between keywords results in a narrower search; using *or* results in a broader search.
* Searching Google Scholar offers some advantages over searching the ERIC database, such as access to articles that cited a particular source as a reference and provision of citation formats.
* Writing a literature review is not an easy process, as every topic’s body of literature differs.
* When writing a literature review, the goal should be to provide the historical context of the topic, its research trends, and how theory has informed practice (and vice versa).
* When summarizing articles, the emphasis should be on the findings of previous research studies.
* Once you begin writing the literature review, the organization and subheadings are key elements.
* A literature review should not be written as an annotated bibliography but, rather, as a cohesive essay that flows from paragraph to paragraph.
* Topics in a literature review should be ordered from those least related to your study to those most closely related to your study.
* Summarizing your literature review in a few concluding paragraphs is highly beneficial for readers.
* Even if you are not conducting a formal literature review, immersing yourself in research literature is a good practice for professional development.