A literature review is an iterative process, which you control yourself. You can execute the following steps to make sure that you have performed a thorough literature review. Of course, the writing process cannot be (entirely) separated from this.

**Subject selection**
Search for a subject that makes you feel enthusiastic. Look on the Internet, social media, news(papers), journal articles, textbooks or reference works.

**Frame your research question**
Narrow your subject and divide your research question by any sub-questions. Look for aspects that interest you in the literature relevant to your discipline.

**Define key terms and synonyms**
Check a reference work e.g. encyclopedias, handbooks, a dictionary and review academic articles in order to familiarise yourself with your subject. Note key subject terms and their synonyms.

**Determine publication type**
What publication type provides the information you need? I.e. are you looking for news, scientific information or e.g. quantitative data?

**Select a search tool**
What search tool do you need? A search engine, a bibliographic- or numerical database (e.g. Google Scholar, RUQuest, PubMed, Web of Science)?

**Search**
Search systematically; combine key subject terms and synonyms with the correct search operators. Evaluate results based on quantity & quality. Revise your search as you see fit. Search for, or follow citations, i.e. check reference lists of an article or book for recent developments or the bigger picture. You could also check whether an article of your interest is being cited in other publications.

**Document**
Record your search strategy e.g. search terms, search options, search filters, search operators etc. Collect your references with a reference tool such as Endnote.

Tips & Tricks

NOT: Overfishing
DO: What is the influence of different fishing methods on sole and plaice. For more info, check here.

Check the Library Guide Science to find online encyclopedias and handbooks useful for your field of study.

Check the Library Guide Science to find databases useful for your field of study.

Stay informed about new publications by means of setting alerts, if the system allows you to. Create a (free) personal account if necessary.

Record your search history if the system allows you to, or copy the search history e.g. to MS Word or your note-taking app.

☆ Check our e-learning site for learning more!
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☆ Need help writing? Contact the Radboud Writing Lab
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