

## Organizing Sources: Overview

Preparation for most writing assignments includes reading and organizing information. While it may be tempting to rush through these steps, successful students make sure they leave time to engage with their sources and to think about how they can integrate the information.

When working on an assignment that requires you to weave sources together, you may want to consider the following schemas to test out how your sources relate to each other.

HOW SOURCES RELATE	
<b>Definition</b>	Sources will use similar words, but achieve different ends. A literature review is an opportunity to define the key terms in your project. You have the opportunity to place your definition in relation to other works.
<b>Length</b>	The reader determines the importance of a source, in part, by the space you give it. In your literature review, you will want to consider the amount of space you give to each source. You want to meaningfully engage with foundational sources. You also want to balance these sources with others that are briefly discussed. You don't want to spark questions that you don't have space to answer.
<b>Benefits &amp; Drawbacks</b>	Give credit where it's due. Be generous with your sources. Every work has flaws, but also some value. You should ensure that you don't falsely discredit a work that you include. Otherwise, the reader may ask: if this work is so problematic, why are you discussing it?
<b>Gaps &amp; Concentrations</b>	Because a literature review is a purpose-driven document, you can use it to highlight a gap in the current literature. You can also use it to develop a particular concentration within a larger topic. By positioning yourself within the field, you can locate the gap that your work will fill. You can also suggest the limits of your project by suggesting that you are only focusing on a particular subsection of a theory or a methodology.

When you bring the sources together, try to keep in mind the following “do”s and “don’t”s

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize your sources into categories that reflect a connection to your research question. Don't just sort by subject.</li> <li>Use reporting expressions (Author + Verb) and demonstrate the “conversation” in the field.</li> <li>Address contested territory in the field.</li> <li>Focus on how the literature ties into what you're doing, rather than making it comprehensive (including everything).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give a sequential summary of articles.</li> <li>Have one paragraph per source.</li> <li>Leave the reader wondering "why is this here?"</li> <li>Include irrelevant material.</li> </ul>