

Sample Format For Reviewing A Journal Article

Reading and summarizing a research article in the behavioral or medical sciences can be overwhelming. Below is a simple model to guide students through this process.

Authors' last names (year) conducted a study about _____. **The participants were/the setting was _____.** (*New paragraph*) **The findings were _____.** *Discussion.* (*Possibly a new paragraph*) **The authors suggested _____.** *Discussion.*

Students should fill in the blanks with their own words. To copy directly from the article fails to show comprehension and may also be considered plagiarism.

To “fill in the blanks”, a student should read the journal article and pay specific attention to:

Sentence #1- Authors' last names (year) conducted a study about _____.

- Read the *Abstract*; this will give an overview of the study's (article's) purpose.
- Read the entire article without trying to summarize it.
- Go back and read the *Literature Review* or *Background* section of the article. Toward the end of the section, the authors should identify gaps in the existing literature and tell the reader how the current study will fill that gap. The authors will also state their hypothesis (purpose) at the end of this section.

Section #2 - The participants were/the setting was _____.

- Read the *Methods* section of the paper. In this section, the authors will describe how the data was collected, who was included in the sample, and any instruments used.
- A reader might want to consider sample size, demographic characteristics, or any interesting protocol.
- It is not necessary to report every fact (i.e., 35% of the participants were male, 71% identified their race as Asian).

Section #3 - The findings were _____.

- Read the *Findings* section of the article.
- Some statistics may be confusing. Pay attention to key words such as “increased”, “decreased”, “improved”, and “reduced”.
- “No change” may also be considered a significant finding.
- Next, read the *Discussion* section. The authors will present the findings in general terms.

Section #4 - The authors suggested _____.

- Read the *Discussion* section and look for comments that the authors made about the intervention or program such as “Did it work?” or “Should it be continued?”.
- Look for the author's critique of why the study did or did not produce results. Did anything unexpected influence the findings?
- The author may suggest a future line of research or “next steps” to improve the body of knowledge.

Additional Considerations:

- A literature review is a summary of what research has been completed in a topic area; it should be summarized in your own words.
- Read the entire article first and then go back and take notes. Jot down notes in your own words. This increases comprehension as well as decreases the likelihood of plagiarism.
- The review is written in third person; no “I” or “you”.
- Unless stated otherwise, a literature review ideally reflects articles published in the last five to ten years.
- Not every detail or fact needs to be reported. A reader will obtain a copy of the article if more information is needed.
- Write the literature review in the past tense; the research has already been completed.
- The article cannot “do”, “find”, or “say” anything. The authors are the people who conducted the study.
- The above format is a guideline. It may be necessary to change the verbs or to expand an idea.