

Tracking, Organizing, and Using Sources

Citations

An important part of using sources is providing appropriate citations.

Proper citations allow your reader to:

- Follow your research path and access your sources
- Evaluate your credibility as a writer and researcher
- Distinguish your ideas from those of others
- Give appropriate credit for ideas and words
- Share resources with collaborators



Citation management software

Citation management software can help you keep track of your sources, as well as help you:

- build and organize your own database
- import citations from your favorite databases and websites
- save and organize PDFs, screenshots, graphs, images, and other files for your research
- format bibliographies
- format citations for papers
- annotate articles in your database
- share articles and annotations

Organizing sources: IDENTIFYING THEMES AND PATTERNS

A literature review is not a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another. You are describing your analysis of the work that has been done and making an argument. To use your sources effectively, you need to identify patterns and relationships; finding patterns provides structure that allows you to evaluate and synthesize the information your sources.

To evaluate sources effectively, you need to have a system to keep track of your sources and to take notes.

You need a consistent format that allows you to identify:

- similarities/differences
- strengths/weaknesses
- key findings
- the source of the information

One useful system to keep track of information and take notes is a table.

Sample sources table: Impact of 2004 Thailand Tsunami

Source	Impact on:	Measurement	Time period	Amount of impact
Jones et al. 2011	Tourists	Hotel numbers	2004 vs 2010	30% decrease
Smith et al. 2013	Fishermen	# fishermen # fish caught	2004 vs 2008	40% decrease 55 % decrease
Smith et al. 2013	Fishermen	# fishmen # fish caught	2008 vs 2011	10% increase 25 % increase
Brown et al. 2012	Tourists	Hotel numbers	2003 vs 2006	60 % decrease
Brown et al. 2012	Fishermen	# fishermen	2003 vs 2006	60 % decrease

Using the Patterns and Themes as Evidence

In a literature review or a manuscript, you present an **argument** and support it with evidence/data. Identifying patterns and themes allows you to shape your **argument**, so often you present these patterns and themes to support your **argument**; the patterns and themes are your evidence.