



Article Review

What is an article review?

An article review summarises and assesses or evaluates one or several articles. As a reviewer you are expected to draw on a broad knowledge of the content area for each article under review.

The purpose of an article review

The review:

- provides a brief description of the purpose and content of one or more articles
- analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the article/s in terms of their value to a specific field of knowledge
- shows how the article/s contributes to that field of knowledge.

Parts of an article review

Article reviews have several parts or stages:

- a *heading*, or *introduction*, which provides all the necessary bibliographic information about the article
- a *summary* which outlines the article and reports briefly on its purpose, content and overall argument and/or conclusions drawn
- a *critique* which evaluates the article, analyses its strengths and weaknesses, which can include reference to other research, and shows how the article contributes to a field of knowledge
- a *conclusion* which provides a personal response to the article

These parts usually follow one another often without the use of subheadings. More information about summarising and critiquing is given below.

Steps in writing an article review

When preparing to write an article review you undertake several different activities:

- reading and noting
- writing the first draft
- revising and redrafting

Reading and noting

Before you begin reading your article/s you need to have a clear idea about your purpose so that you can approach the article and the related readings with useful questions in mind. Allow time to think about the topic, read and analyse the article, and read other texts.

Brainstorming the topic can be a good starting point. Ask yourself whether you know about alternative views that have been presented on this topic. This can help you to identify the strengths and gaps in your knowledge and may prompt questions that will guide your initial reading of the article as well as your wider reading.

Some of the following questions might be helpful in your reading of the article/s:

- What is the author's **objective** or stated purpose? Where and how is this stated?
- Has a **theoretical framework** been presented?
- What **concepts** have been included? Are definitions of these clearly stated?
- Do other researchers define the same **concepts** differently?
- Are the **methods** used clearly stated?
- What is the main line of **argument**? Is the main line of argument logical?
- What **arguments** does the author use to support the main line of argument?
- What **evidence** does the author use to support the argument or conclusions drawn?
- Is the **evidence** well presented, sufficient and convincing?
- Does the evidence support the conclusions drawn?
- Are there **alternative** points of view or lines of argument?
- Where does the author stand in relation to **other points of view** on this topic?
- Does the text present or refute **opposing lines of argument** and **evidence**?
- Does the research **build on** existing knowledge?
- Who is the intended **audience**? Is it a specialised or general audience?
- Is the author's **language and writing style** clear and readable?

Some of these questions will be addressed through your wider reading on the topic.

Your notes provide a record of your thinking and will help in writing both the summary and critique section of the review. Once you have brainstormed ideas, consider which information is relevant to the summary and which is relevant to the critique.

Writing the first draft

Remember that you are writing for your lecturer or tutor who is knowledgeable in the area. They are interested in not only the content but also your assessment of the article/s.

Introduction

Provide the bibliographic information (such as the author, title, year of publication, name and number of journal) and identify the main points you will be discussing.

Summary

A good summary demonstrates that you understood the article well. In the summary provide:

- a clear sense of what the article is describing with its main ideas presented in the same order as in the article
- an understanding of the author's purpose. Do this objectively by providing supporting evidence from the article.

Critique

The critique is your evaluation of the article based on your reading and analysis of the article/s and other literature. Identify the author's argument first, before critiquing it. Some possible approaches of the critique include:

- to critique each of the points made in the summary so that your critique mirrors the organisation of the summary.
- to critique a small number of key points in light of other literature.
- be explicit about your reasons for the strength or weakness of the article and present the evidence or reasons that influenced your views. For example, if you consider that the author presented a biased point of view you need to provide examples of bias from the article.
- to show how the article contributes to a field of knowledge by comparing it with other authors who are writing on similar topics.

The conclusion

This is your opportunity to give your overall personal response to the article. Depending on your assignment instructions, you may want to comment on how the article has contributed or changed your views. It may be appropriate to offer recommendations. For example, you might think that:

- more research done needs to be done OR
- more practical applications given need to be given OR
- another author's work on the same topic is more convincing, more readable or has more practical suggestions for action.

You can do this as long as you support your point of view. This enables your readers to make their own decisions about the article in the light of the evidence that you have presented.

Finding 'model' reviews

If you are writing your first article review you may wish to read a review that someone else has written. Some lecturers upload models of assignments onto their course sites which they want you to follow. Most professional journals have a review section where you can read published reviews on issues relevant to your studies. See the journals recommended by your lecturer or use the Library to locate relevant periodicals.

When you look at a review that could serve as a model, you need to consider the review's purpose, structure, organisation, and use of language. What does it set out to do and how well does it do it?