Writing a literature review is a research journey. We’ve identified five critical steps and created this guide to help you along the way. Before you begin the journey, this e-lecture will give you an overview of the process.
Now let’s get started with the overview of the research journey. Your first step is to formulate a research question. Your research question is going to guide your journey and define how you take each step. In this step you’ll frame a question based on your initial research on and understanding of a topic.

Since your journey may be long, it's important that your question is one which interests you and is worthy of research.
With your research question in hand, and using its language as a starting point, you’re ready to take the step of searching the literature. In this step, you’ll be standing on the ‘shoulders of giants’ by collecting prior research.

Search article databases, the library catalog, Google Scholar, and other sources to find scholarly information. Evaluate what you find and select articles, books, and other resources that best address your research question.
Your third step is to manage all your gathered information. Managing and organizing your data allows you to know where you’ve been, where you are, and where you’re going on the research journey.

Choose a research management tool like RefWorks, EndNote, Zotero, or Mendeley to help you stay organized. Using one of these tools, together with a well-developed note-taking system, will come in handy when you’re writing and citing your literature review!
All along you’ll be using your brain.

But in the fourth step your brain is the most important tool. While researching and organizing your paper, you’ll have collected a lot of information from many different sources.

In this step, you’ll read through your resources to understand, analyze, critique, and synthesize the research literature.
The fifth step in the research journey is to write the literature review. Writing is not separate from the research journey. Writing is the researcher’s voice.

Writing is your opportunity to communicate how the literature addresses your research question. A well-written literature review reflects your scholarly accomplishment.

One more thing: Writing a literature review is a journey, but it's not always a straight path from one point to another. One step does lead to another, but sometimes your research or reading will point you back to earlier steps as you learn more about your topic and the literature. Be prepared to engage in an exciting, iterative journey.