

# WRITING STUDIO

## Building a Strong Foundation for Your Literature Review: Activity Worksheet By: Tyrell Collins

**This worksheet will guide you through key steps to start thinking about your literature review and organizing your research.**

### Part 1: Defining Your Research Question

Instructions: Refine your research question by answering the prompts below.

What is your broad research area?

(Example: Gender bias in STEM careers)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

What specific aspect of this topic interests you?

(Example: The role of mentorship in addressing bias)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you identify a gap in the literature? What hasn't been explored?

(Example: Few studies explore the mentorship experiences of LGBTQ+ students in STEM)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Refine your question into a focused and researchable statement:

(Example: "How do mentorship programs address the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students in STEM fields?")

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 2: Planning Your Literature Search

Instructions: Identify where you will look for sources and keywords to use.

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List three academic databases or resources you will use:

(Examples: JSTOR, PsycINFO, EconLit)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Write down 5 keywords or phrases for your search:

(Example: LGBTQ+ mentorship, gender bias STEM, diversity in STEM education)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Part 3: Evaluating Sources**

Instructions: Practice evaluating a source using the criteria below.

How does this source establish its credibility or ethos?

(Consider the author's expertise, the publication venue, and whether the source demonstrates authority on the topic.)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_-

How does the source engage its intended audience?

(Think about the language, tone, and multimodal elements used to connect with readers.)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

What assumptions does the source make about its audience's values or knowledge?

(Does it assume prior familiarity with the subject or align itself with specific ideological or disciplinary perspectives?)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

How does the methodology strengthen or weaken the source's argument?

(Reflect on whether the methods used are suitable for the source's purpose and audience.)

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Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways does this source contribute to the larger conversation in the field?  
(Consider whether it confirms, challenges, or fills a gap in the existing literature.)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

How might this source's purpose or rhetorical situation shape the way it presents evidence or frames its argument?  
(Think about how the source's context—time, place, or audience—affects its content and conclusions.)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part 4: Organizing Your Literature Review**

Instructions: Think about how to structure your literature review.

Which structure might work best for your review?  
(Chronological, Thematic, Methodological)

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

List three possible subheadings for your literature review:  
(Example: "Gender Bias in STEM Education," "Mentorship Strategies," "Challenges for LGBTQ+ Students")

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part 5: Reflecting on the Process**

Instructions: Answer these final questions to consolidate your approach.

What do you hope to achieve with your literature review?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

How can identifying patterns and gaps strengthen your research argument?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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