

Narrative Reviews in 5 Steps:



Curated by
Javeed Sukhera

01. Identifying a Research Question

- Describe the rationale and justification for the review
- Frame the review by describing how the research question aligns with existing literature and why the review may offer unique insights for the field



02. Searching the Literature

- Name the databases being searched
- Provide as much information as possible about how the search strategy and search terms were developed with appropriate rationale for the decisions made along the way
- Different subtypes of narrative reviews may involve specific principles or guidelines as part of this search



03. Screening the Literature

- Consider specifying inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Not designed to be comprehensive but offering the rationale for specific parameters is important
- Be clear and explicit about choices made, how screening was conducted, and team members involved
- Consider how quality was appraised for included studies



04. Sampling the Literature

- Researchers can limit their sample to peer-reviewed journal articles or may choose to use reference lists and grey literature, such as meeting abstracts and presentations
- Reflexivity: reviewers must be explicit about how the researchers' perspectives and experiences informed decisions, including sampling strategy



05. Data Analysis

- All types of narrative reviews must include some form of both descriptive and interpretive analysis
- The exact method of analysis may vary; some will rely on thematic or content analysis while others will take a more discursive or critical approach
- Some narrative review subtypes are more prescriptive in approach. For example, a meta-narrative review involves narrative synthesis to make sense of different narratives about a chosen topic. A critical narrative review involves interpretive analysis that compares a field's theoretical understanding of a topic with existing literature on the same topic from a different discipline
- Review authors must provide examples that justify their interpretations and coherently demonstrate how their interpretations have been used to inform their conclusions

