

STUDY TIPS

USING MATRICES TO ORGANISE THE LITERATURE

There are many methods for taking notes from a text, but we also need a strategy for capturing information from a variety of texts so we have an overview of it. Matrices are very useful for this.

They can be used for:

- identifying which texts deal with which concepts
- identifying key points and how you will incorporate these points in your writing
- Identifying which texts deal with which themes, identifying main points
- summarising key points that support or refute an argument.

Here is an example of each.

Identifying which texts deal with particular themes

Texts	Topic: Prenatal influences on the child			
Concepts → Texts	Harmful substances & diseases	Maternal age and physical characteristics	Domestic violence	Prenatal health care
McDonald (2011)	✓	✓		
Smith, 2009)	✓		✓	
Langley(2011)				✓
Seddon (2012)			✓	
Anderson (2010)	✓			✓
Etc., etc...				

Identifying key points and how you will use them in your writing

Topic: Issues in measurement of teaching quality		
Texts	Main points	Comments/Use in my writing
Keogh (2011)	Learning performance = index measuring result of learning and quality of teaching	But what does 'quality' of teaching mean?
Brown (2009)	Identifies several criteria of quality of teaching	Contrast 2 nd criterion with Keogh's ideas; differences are contentious
Morgan (2011)	Etc, etc...	Etc, etc...

Identifying which texts deal with which themes, identifying main points

Topic: Prenatal influences on the child				
Concepts →	Harmful substances & diseases	Environmental dangers	Prenatal health care	Etc...
Texts				
McDonald (2011)	Tobacco = retarded foetal growth & increased infant mortality			
Smith, 2009)		Impact involves interaction of many factors		
Langley(2011)	Tobacco: Generally agrees with Jones but disputes causal influence – too many variables	Challenges in identifying exposure to toxins		
Seddon (2012)	Alcohol: Effects of foetal alcohol syndrome			
Anderson (2010)		Useful table of toxicants & associated foetal impact	Frequency of pre-natal examinations – benefits & problems	
Etc., etc...				

Summarising points supporting or refuting an argument

Topic: Does meditation improve the immune system?		
Texts	Support	Refute
O'Dwyer & Jones (2010)	Single case report Healing was more rapid when subjects meditated	
McKenzie (2011)		Two-group design No difference observed
Peters et al. (2009)	Two-group design Meditation group significantly reduced infection rates	
Etc., etc...		