THE LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a fancy sounding name for a background information paper. The review should contain information and facts that help the reader (probably your teacher) become familiar with your topic or subject area. It should also contain specific information about experiments that scientists have done which relate to your topic area. It should be 2-5 typed pages. The literature review is ABSOLUTELY NOT a paper about your specific experiment. Focus instead on the broader subject area of your topic. Also, do not expect to find scientists who have completed and published the exact experiment you have in mind.

Take lots and lots of notes as you look through books, periodicals (that’s a fancy name for magazines), journals, dvds... on your area of interest. Putting each note or thought on a separate note card is recommended. That way when you actually start to write the paper you just need to arrange the cards in a logical order.

**Introductory Information:** This is a paragraph or two explaining what your topic is and even stating the question that you hope to answer through your experiment. You may even want to include some implications that your research may have...what could we do with the information you learn in your project?

**Background Information:** This should be the bulk of the paper. This section gives the reader any information needed in order to understand your project and experiment as a whole. For example if your project is on lead contamination in water supplies then you need to explain why we should be concerned about lead contamination, how water supplies are cleaned, how water supplies could become contaminated with lead, what lead is and its uses...

**Related Research:** This section is where you inform the reader of research experiments that are related to your topic. **DO NOT** try to find researchers who have completed your exact experiment. Look for researchers who have experimented in your topic area. **DO NOT** tell the reader what you plan to do in your experiment -- that is what the research plan is for.

**Conclusion:** This section should bring the reader back to ideas written in the introduction and tie together all the parts of the paper. At this time you may include a sentence or two on what your experiment is and the question you hope to answer.

**Bibliography:** This is a complete list of ALL sources you used to write your literature review. A good number to aim for is six to eight varied sources. A more detailed explanation of the bibliography and method of citation is found on another page.