Common Mistakes in Literature Reviewing

- Review is too descriptive. No critiquing or critical evaluation of the evidence. No identification of strengths and weaknesses. It becomes an essay, not a review. It does not set the foundation for your own research process.

- It becomes a dumping ground to write down everything you know about the topic or is presented as a series of quotes from the papers you have read. There is no attempt to interweave concepts, transform the researcher’s understanding of the topic and the research process, acknowledge the gap that the research is going to fill or the impact the research intends to have.

- Not enough time has been allocated to searching and reviewing the literature or the review has been undertaken well into the project. The review should help to inform your final research question, future methodologies and identify whether there is indeed a "gap" in the current research literature that your question is going to answer.

- Literature used is not from a wide range of scholarly, peer reviewed sources.

- There is no documentation or explanation of how the search was undertaken, the key terms used, sources searched or limits applied.

- There is no explanation of inclusion/exclusion criteria and why they were selected.

- Referencing within the written review does not follow your School or publisher guidelines. It is not consistent in style or presentation.

- There has been no revision or proof reading. Thinking and conceptual understanding develops as you write. Go back over what you have written a few days after you have done it. Check grammar and language. The research process is about sharing - give it to someone else to proof read and to check their understanding.

- The researcher views the initial literature review as a foundational process not an iterative, developmental process in terms of understanding, thinking and writing.