

What's the difference between a literature review, systematic review, and meta-analysis?

A literature review is designed to review the literature on a given topic. Literature reviews examine the existing literature in order to frame new research in the context of what is already known, and justify why new research is needed.

A systematic review is a more formal and rigorous approach where the search itself is the research. Systematic reviews start with a research question and exclusion/inclusion criteria, and then go through the existing literature to find studies that match those criteria to answer the research question.

A meta-analysis is when statistical analysis is used on the data gathered from multiple independent studies to see if there is significance to a particular intervention. While similar to systematic reviews, they can be conducted independently of one another.