Drafting a Summary Table

Contributor: Logan Miller

A summary table allows you to compare common research methods, findings, limitations, etc. You can order the entries in any way that you find useful; consider ordering your research alphabetically, by timeliness, or even by grouping similar study aims, models, or results.

Once compiled, you can use this table to compare studies side by side. Such comparison can help you see trends in findings, identify gaps in the research, and rank each study by relative strength. In short, it helps you organize information on a broad topic, which is a crucial first step in synthesizing that information within a research paper.

Summary areas might include

- **Authors / Date**: If a paper has numerous authors, consider the level of detail you require to identify a given study.

- **Aim of Study / Paper**: What were the researchers hoping to learn? This section may include research questions or hypotheses.

- **Type of Study / Information**: These might be systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials, etc. If you’re less familiar with what these designs entail, writing a short description can be useful.

- **Main Findings / Conclusions**: The level of detail you employ will come down to necessity and experience, but in listing specific findings, you may see trends or discrepancies across studies.

- **Strengths / Limitations**: Strengths may include good research design or data-based conclusions. Remember, a study may mention its limitations explicitly, but many limitations require careful inquiry to uncover.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors / Date</th>
<th>Aim of Study / Paper</th>
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<th>Main Findings / Conclusions</th>
<th>Strengths / Limitations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Azzopardi, D., Patel, K., Jaunky, T., Santopietro, S., Camacho, O. M., McAughey, J., Gaça, M., (2016).</td>
<td>Test and describe an <em>in vitro</em> method for assessing the cytotoxic response of e-cigarette aerosols compared with conventional cigarette smoke.</td>
<td>Lab research using a smoking machine, human lung epithelial cells, 3R4F cigarettes, and Vype eStick/ePen e-cigarettes.</td>
<td>ePen aerosol was significantly less cytotoxic compared to 3R4F cigarette based on the EC₅₀ values. Aerosol dilution (1:5 vs. 1:153 aerosol:air vol:vol) was 97 percent, deposited mass (52.1 vs. 3.1 μg/cm²) was 94 percent, and estimated deposited nicotine (0.89 vs. 0.27 μg/cm²) was 70 percent.</td>
<td>The authors are employees of British American Tobacco and the study was funded by BAT. This potential conflict of interest is only acknowledged.</td>
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