



NOVABYTE AI SUCCESS SERIES

Research Templates

Five worksheets for turning a pile of papers into a review you can defend.

- 1 Search Log
- 2 Source Evaluation Sheet
- 3 Five Questions Card
- 4 Synthesis Matrix
- 5 Literature Review Outline

Built on the **NovaByte Research Method**: Ask · Find · Evaluate · Synthesize · Verify. The discipline is not skipping steps — every research disaster comes from skipping one.

Ask & Find - track what you searched, where, and what it returned.

Research question	[your focused, specific question]
Date started	[when]

Shrink the question first: a topic has thousands of papers; a specific question has a searchable few.

SEARCH TERMS & SYNONYMS

Build these with AI, then run them in real databases (Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR).

Concept	Search terms / synonyms tried

WHERE I SEARCHED

Database / source	Date	Results found	Kept?

LET AI BUILD THE SEARCH NET

You are a research librarian. Give me alternative search terms and a Boolean string for [my question]. Group synonyms by concept with OR, join concepts with AND, and suggest 3 databases likely to hold this literature.

⚠ Fabricated citations — the career-ending copy-paste

Never ask a general AI chatbot to “give me sources” and paste the results into your bibliography. Language models generate plausible text, and a plausible citation can name real authors, a real journal, and a paper that does not exist. A source exists when you have opened it — not when software lists it.

Evaluate - the Five Questions for any source, before you trust it.

Source title	[paper / article / report]
Author(s)	[who]
Where & when published	[journal / site, year]

THE TRUST LADDER

Peer-reviewed journal article > reputable report > news > blog/company page > raw AI output. Place this source honestly; if it is low, note what it points to that ranks higher.

Trust-ladder rung	[where it sits, and why]
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THE FIVE QUESTIONS

Extract these, then VERIFY each against the document yourself - especially the quoted sentence.

#	Question	Your finding
1	Who wrote it, and their affiliation?	
2	Where and when was it published?	
3	Sample size and method (and its weaknesses)?	
4	Do the abstract's claims match the results?	
5	Any funding source or conflict of interest?	

HOSTILE READ

The five strongest criticisms of this source's evidence and reasoning:

VERDICT (TWO SENTENCES)

Its rung, the weight it can carry, and what you'd check before relying on it further.

THE EXTRACTION PROMPT

From the attached document, extract: (1) who wrote it and their affiliation, (2) where and when it was published, (3) sample size and method, with that method's standard weaknesses, (4) whether the abstract's claims match the results inside, (5) any funding or conflict of interest. Quote the key results sentence so I can locate it.

Five Questions Card

A quick-reference card for the five extraction questions.

Run these on every source. They turn "it looks credible" into "here is exactly what it says and how far I can trust it."

1 - WHO WROTE IT?

Author and their affiliation. Do they have standing? A stake?

2 - WHERE AND WHEN?

Publication venue and date. Peer-reviewed? Recent enough to matter?

3 - WHAT DID THEY ACTUALLY DO?

Sample size and method - and that method's standard weaknesses.

4 - DO THE CLAIMS MATCH THE RESULTS?

Does the abstract's promise match the numbers reported inside?

5 - WHO PAID, AND WHO BENEFITS?

Funding source or conflict of interest that could shape the findings.

Synthesize - organise sources by theme, not one-by-one.

A synthesis matrix has your themes as rows and sources as columns, recording what each says about each theme. It converts a pile of papers into a map: who agrees, who disagrees, where the silence is.

Research question

[your question]

THE MATRIX

Fill each cell with that source's position on that theme. Leave blank where a source is silent - blanks are research gaps.

Theme / question	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4

WHERE THEY DISAGREE (THE INTERESTING PART)

GAPS - WHAT NO SOURCE ADDRESSES (WHERE YOUR WORK EARNS ITS PLACE)

THE SYNTHESIS PROMPT

Here are my verified summaries of [N] papers: [paste]. (1) Group them into 3-5 themes relevant to [my question]. (2) Within each theme, note where studies agree, disagree, and why. (3) List the gaps. Present it as a matrix: theme x papers x position.

Verify & draft - turn the matrix into a review, theme by theme.

Draft from the matrix, one theme per section, in your own words. AI may tighten prose but never supply a claim you have not verified against the source itself.

Working title	[your review's title]
Central question	[what the review answers]

INTRODUCTION - THE QUESTION AND WHY IT MATTERS

THEMES (ONE SECTION EACH, FROM YOUR MATRIX)

Theme	Key sources	The argument this section makes

SYNTHESIS - AGREEMENTS, TENSIONS, AND THE GAP YOUR WORK FILLS

VERIFICATION CHECKLIST

Before anything leaves your hands:

☐	Check
☐	Every citation opened and confirmed real (not AI-generated)
☐	Every quoted sentence located in the actual source
☐	Every claim traced to a verified summary, none invented
☐	Numbers and statistics checked against the original
☐	Paraphrased in my own words, not the AI's