How to use NVivo for your Literature Review.

A step by step guide.

The first thing you must do is identify the appropriate literature to read. These could be journal articles, books, reports, websites or a range of other documents. An important aspect of the process is managing your references. I use a reference management platform called Refworks, I will be explaining its use in my next article. Before all else you will need to copy the citation of the article you are reviewing so that it can be pasted into NVivo, this will help you remember where the document came from. If this is your first review then you will need to create a new NVivo file, I recommend you name it the subject area you are focusing on.

With NVivo open, create a new document by clicking on the ‘Create’ tab, then select ‘Document’ this will be stored in ‘Source’, ‘Internal’ (see figure 1).

![Figure 1: Creating a document.](image)

Name the document using ‘Author’ and ‘Year’ as the nomenclature (i.e., Shaw 2017). Paste the full reference at the top of the document, then copy and paste the abstract. Review your chosen piece of literature, then when you find something of interest, copy and paste it into the NVivo document as a new paragraph and note the page number. Pasting an exact copy gives you the option of either paraphrasing it at a later stage or using the direct quote in your work (this is why you need the page
number). Once you have done this highlight the paragraph then give it a name (a node / code / theme). If it is a new node then right click your mouse and select ‘Code Selection’ then ‘Code Selection at New Node’, type in your node / code / theme name (this is likely to be a section heading you will use in your literature review), see figure 2a and 2b.

![Figure 2a: Code selection.](image1)

![Figure 2b: Code selection (naming).](image2)
If it is an existing node or if you are not sure if you have used it before right click your mouse and select ‘Code Selection’ then ‘Code Selection at Existing Node’, look up the appropriate node then tick the box, see figure 3a and 3b.

Figure 3a: Code selection (Existing).

Figure 3b: Code selection (Existing).

Continue the process until you have completed reviewing the chosen piece of literature. You can review what you have done by clicking on the ‘View’ tab, then ‘Coding Stipes’ then ‘All Nodes Coding’. This will present the nodes on the right-hand side of the document. Note, each word, sentence or paragraph can have more than one theme (code) see figure 4a and 4b.

Figure 4a: Selecting coding strips.
Once you have reviewed all the articles, books, websites etc, you can start thinking about how to structure your literature review. To do this you must first review each node, just click on Nodes (left window), you will see all your nodes / themes, you can sort them by clicking on the reference tab, see figure 5.
When you click on the selected name of the node it will open showing you the aggregated data that you have saved (figure 6).

![Figure 6](image6.png)

Figure 6: Viewing node (theme) details.

This will illustrate all the authors (you have reviewed) that have given an opinion about the element of literature you have considered. You must then decide if it is worthy of a place in your literature review. If you click on the hyperlink it will open the original document, you can now retrievethe whole reference if required. You must create a list of all your chosen literature (I do this in Refworks, and as stated earlier I will be covering this in my next article).

If, while reviewing the nodes you decide one needs changing you can simply right click on the node to change the properties through the ‘Get Info’ function: this can only be done if name does already exist (see figure 7a and 7b). There are also ways to merge nodes or create a hierarchy from them, I won’t go through the details now but will cover them in a later article.

![Figure 7a](image7a.png)

Figure 7a: Changing node name.
Overall Summary:

1. Create an NVivo Project.
2. Identify the literature you want to review.
3. Create a document in ‘Sources – Internal’.
4. Name your document: Author Year.
5. Copy the full reference into NVivo.
6. Copy the abstract into NVivo.
7. Identify words, sentences or paragraphs that are useful.
8. Copy and paste these useful words, sentences or paragraphs into NVivo.
9. Add the page number.
10. Highlight what you have copied and give it a node / theme.
11. Repeat process until literature review complete.
12. Sort and review nodes to develop the literature review structure.