

Evidence Synthesis Review Timeline

Evidence synthesis research is time intensive: these projects commonly span a year or more to completion.

This table provides some average timelines for each element in a scoping or systematic review.

MONTH	TASK	DESCRIPTION	STAGE
1-2	Formulate research question	Refine and finalize your research question, ideally using a research question framework	Preparation
1-2	Check for existing evidence synthesis reviews on your topic	Search for published evidence synthesis reviews or protocols that answer questions similar to yours	Preparation
1-3	Develop search strategy	Retrieve and generate keywords and subject headings and incorporate appropriate syntax to create a search strategy which will find all relevant studies. You will need to translate your foundational search strategy to each database important to your topic.	Preparation
2-3	Write and register a protocol	Document the method, timeline and responsibilities for your review. Register the protocol to create an immutable record of your planned project and enhance accountability.	Preparation
3-5	Primary search	Execute your search strategy in each database	Retrieval
3-5	Grey literature search	If aligned with your inclusion criteria, search for grey literature such as conference proceedings, reports, dissertations and theses.	Retrieval
4-5	Export and de-duplicate citations	Export citations from your citation manager and remove duplicate citations	Retrieval
5-8	Title and abstract screening	Screen titles and abstracts against your inclusion and exclusion criteria	Screening
5-8	Obtain full-text articles	Download from databases, request copies from inter-library loan, contact authors Note: please notify interlibrary loan at libill@brocku.ca before placing bulk requests	Screening

MONTH	TASK	DESCRIPTION	STAGE
5-8	Full-text screening	Screen full-text articles against your inclusion and exclusion criteria	Screening
9	Supplemental search	Check reference lists of included articles for potential additional citations; new titles must go through screening process	Retrieval
9-11	Data extraction	Extract all relevant data from each article and record for analysis	Synthesis
9-11	Data synthesis	If appropriate, convert extracted data to common measurements	Synthesis
9-11	Data analysis	Combine results from all included studies; analysis may be qualitative (thematic) or quantitative	Synthesis
12	Write report of review	Produce and disseminate final report of results	Reporting

- Table adapted from [Western Libraries](#)