A Brief Survey of XXXX

Your Name (Email)

1. The goal of your literature review is to synthesize a set of papers about a topic. Note that this is different from a simple list of paragraphs covering each paper; instead, you should try to organize the papers you've read into a structure and connect them so that you can discuss their similarity and differences. Your review should help a reader to see a clear overall picture of the papers that you reviewed. It is unnecessary to cover many details of any paper as a reader can and will read the original paper if he or she is interested. That is, your review is mostly to provide an entry point to the relevant literature.

2. Decide whether you would like to do a broad shallow survey or a narrow deep survey. A broad shallow survey can cover many papers (e.g., more than 10 or even 20 papers), but only briefly mention what is in each paper. A narrow one can cover just 6~10 papers, but with more detailed description of each paper. Either strategy is acceptable. In the first case, you can read broadly, but you don't need to read each paper in detail; in the second, you will read fewer papers, but you will also need to understand each paper in more detail. You may make this decision based on which strategy would help you most in finishing your project or based on your own preferences.

3. Select a set of "seed" papers first. You can find them by doing general literature search on the Web and focus on papers that have high citations. Then you can check which papers have cited them. Focus on newer papers on your topic. It's better to read the newest papers and go backward to read relatively older papers. This way your survey will be reflecting the most recent progress, making it more useful.

4. Start reading papers right now, if you haven't already. It takes some time to read a paper especially if a paper is complicated. So you should act now to ensure you will be able to read at least 6 papers in detail or 10 papers in a shallow way by the end of the semester.

5. Check out the following presentation for details about the typical structure of a survey paper:

http://times.cs.uiuc.edu/course/598f12/ppt/6-research.ppt