Psychology Research: From Topic to Search

Ask a librarian!
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Today’s Goals & Outline
After this class, you should be able to...
• describe the relationship between a research topic, an introduction section, and a search strategy
• discuss scholarly literature’s role in original research
• apply advanced search skills to begin the research process
From the PSYC 314 Learning Outcomes...

- Reading and critically evaluating journal articles in psychology
- Using online research databases with a critical eye and distinguishing between “good” sources and “poor” sources of online information

Activity: 5 minutes

Look at the sample article introduction. Read the paragraph for your assigned number.

In groups, discuss:
1. What is the “topic” of your paragraph?
2. How is previous research used or could be used when conducting original research? Why do you need to find and cite previous research?

- College student sleep deficits & causes
- Consequences of poor nighttime sleep
- Possible link between sleep loss and depression
- How researchers measure sleep
- Gap: Quantitative measures of sleep and depression
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical research articles</th>
<th>Theoretical articles</th>
<th>Literature reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report on original empirical research</td>
<td>Discuss or propose theory</td>
<td>Synthesize other scholars’ research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand discoveries from other scholars</td>
<td>Learn about the theory, including definitions and constructs</td>
<td>Learn quickly about a body of literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Find examples of other research using selected approaches</td>
<td>Lend support to yet untested ideas</td>
<td>Learn from critiques of research approaches</td>
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### Sample research question

**How do sleep disturbances affect college students?**

### Think it... but don’t search it!

- Effect/Affect
- Impact
- Change
- Influence
- Advance/Improve
- Help/Aid
- Cause
- Pro/Con
- Benefit
- Importance
PSYC 314 Research Guide

Library Website ➔ “Research Guides” ➔ “Course Guides” ➔ “PSYC 314 Research Methods in Psychology”
OR
http://towson.libguides.com/psyc314

While you’re searching...

...how do you evaluate information from an online database like PsycINFO?

• What are some of the things you look for in your results?
• How do you NARROW your search results more to be relevant to your needs?
• How do you find related information or EXPAND your results?
Citation Chaining
a.k.a. the “Branching Tree”

PsycINFO Thesaurus
- Look for the “Thesaurus” link at the top of the database
- Browse for Subjects – “Relevancy Ranked”
- Use the check boxes on the left of the term to add to your search
- Also a good resource for generating discipline-specific keywords to use in PsycINFO or other databases
Summary

- "Research" involves figuring out what interesting questions have yet to be answered – and using the literature to start exploring those questions.
- Scholarly literature should be used in a variety of ways in your research, including (but not limited to): supporting your ideas, informing your hypothesis, identifying controversies or gaps, providing the reader with background information, selecting a methodology, making sense of your results in the larger context of the field, etc.
- Complex database searching and using tools like limiters, subject terms, the thesaurus, citation chaining, etc. are important steps to the beginning stages of research.

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