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2019

### Developing a Research Topic Using the Library

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#### Recommended Citation

Ilett, Darren and Evers, Stephanie, "Developing a Research Topic Using the Library" (2019). *Information Literacy*. 21.

<https://digscholarship.unco.edu/infolit/21>

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## Lesson Plan: Developing a Research Topic Using the Library

### **Introduction** (~2-3 min.)

- Tell students that this lesson will help them when they have to do a research paper in any class; they can use the library to develop a research topic.
- Objectives: determine keywords for searching, develop a research paper topic, and find sources using a library database/discovery tool.

### **Part 1: Ripped from the Headlines** (~7 min.)

- Explain that news stories are a way to get ideas for research papers when you're stuck.
- Explain that we're thinking of keywords to develop a research topic and search for sources.
- Distribute worksheet.
- Students suggest keywords related to topic of sample headline.
- Students complete part 1, brainstorming keywords for each topic, including their own topic for the class assignment.
- Note: headlines are just starting point; they don't necessarily have to stick closely to them.
- Debrief about specificity of keywords.

### **Part 2: Keywords** (~7 min.)

- Explain to students that searching takes lots of tries with different combinations of keywords.
- Point out example of keywords & synonyms from sample news story.
- Note that they can be either words or phrases and either synonyms or related terms.
- Students complete part 2, listing 3 keywords and 3 synonyms or related terms.
- Have students share results with small groups or share a few examples with whole class.

### **Part 3: Searching** (~10 min.)

- Show students the library database. Describe what it is and what kinds of things it searches for.
- Do a search or two to show results list; talk about anatomy of search screen and of a record.
- Tell students they should start with 1 keyword, then try different combinations of 2-3 keywords, keeping track of the number of search results each time.
- Students complete part 3, trying different keyword combinations.
- Debrief about the effect of combining and changing keywords as well as any obstacles students encountered.

### **Part 4: Developing a Research Topic** (~10 min.)

- Point out that searching can help identify new concepts & develop a research topic.
- Show search results on sample topic & talk about how it led to a research paper topic.
- Students complete part 4.

### **Part 5: Saving Search Results** (~5 min.)

- Tell students that we want to save the sources we've found.
- Demonstrate how to save sources.
- Students complete part 5, saving sources.

### **Debrief** (~5 min.)

- Ask students if they have any unanswered questions.
- Show students how to get additional help.
- Have students take 2-3 minutes at the end of the session to complete a brief assessment.

### **Assessment Questions** (~5 min.)

Students answer these questions:

- A search using the keywords "youth nicotine addiction" did not come up with good results. What are 2 or 3 synonyms or related terms that I could search with instead?
- Why does using more keywords bring up fewer search results?
- What research topic did you end up with?

# Library Session: Developing a Research Topic Using the Library

## Part 1: Ripped from the Headlines

News stories are a great way to come up with ideas for research papers.

Brainstorm 3 important words or phrases from each of these news topics, including a news headline that interests you.

These words or phrases will help us develop a research topic and search for sources.



### Criticism from Parents Affects How Children's Brains Respond to Emotional Information

New research shows that children with critical parents pay less attention to emotional facial expressions



### FDA Cracks Down in 'Blitz' on e-Cigarette Sales to Kids

Popular devices such as Juul may be getting kids addicted to nicotine and causing health issues



To help come up with your own topic, what is a headline you've seen recently that you'd like to learn more about?



## Part 2: Keywords

Successful searching takes lots of tries with different keyword combinations. Let's think of some **synonyms** or **related terms** for our concepts from the news stories to help with searching later.

Here are possible **keywords** and **synonyms** or **related terms** based on our sample news story of critical parents, kids, and emotional facial expressions.

**Important concept #1**

emotional  
information

OR

**Important concept #2**

brain

OR

**Important concept #3**

parents

OR

What keywords fit the news story you picked? Put the 3 most important keywords in the 1st row. Then think of a **synonym** or a **related term** for each keyword and put them in the 2nd row.

**Important concept #1**

OR

**Important concept #2**

OR

**Important concept #3**

OR

## Part 3: Searching

Now let's try out the keywords and synonyms you brainstormed in part #2 to search for sources. Start by searching with 1 keyword. Then add an additional keyword and then finally search on all 3 of your keywords. Keep track of the number of search results.

**Search #1**

Keyword:

Number of results:

**Search #2**

Keywords:

Number of results:

**Search #3**

Keywords:

Number of results:

## Part 4: Developing a Research Topic

Let's use what you found to keep thinking about a possible research paper topic. Searching on your initial idea can help you find new concepts and develop your topic based on what you find.

These are some new concepts I came across in sources I found when searching on my news story and reading titles and abstracts of articles:

*discipline, emotional distress, social anxiety, depression*

Based on what I found, I came up with the following topic for a possible research paper:

*The effect of discipline on children's mental health*

Go back to your search results and skim for new concepts that interest you. List some here:

Based on what you found, fill in below for a more focused research topic:

I am working on the topic \_\_\_\_\_

because I want to find out \_\_\_\_\_

in order to fix/improve \_\_\_\_\_.

## Part 5: Saving Search Results

After you find relevant sources for your topic, you don't want to lose them. Make sure to save the articles or e-mail them to yourself.

[Note to instructor: you can place your own steps for saving sources here.]