

Vocabulary: Key to Searching for the Works of Others

Articulate the subject you want to investigate

Therapy for ptsd for people who experience/engage in spouse abuse

Identify the words/phrases that constitute the main topics

Therapy for *ptsd* for people who experience/engage in *spouse abuse*

Consider using two different types of search tools

Traditional academic database
Search using structured vocabulary (thesaurus)
e.g., *ERIC*, *PsycINFO*, *CINAHL*

Discovery database
Search using whatever text is used by item authors
e.g., EMU's *Esearch*, *Google Scholar*

Searching in a traditional academic database: PsycINFO

- In many traditional academic databases all items are examined by human indexers, who assign subject terms to each item that characterize the content of the item. The subject terms come from a disciplinary thesaurus developed by each database producer.
- In traditional academic databases seek out the subject headings that are used by the database that are synonymous with the topics you are investigating. How?
- Start searching using your own vocabulary for your topics:
therapy AND ptsd AND “spouse abuse”
- Reviewing the result list and the *PsycINFO* thesaurus, you see the subject terms used in *PsycINFO*

therapy
psychotherapy
treatment
counseling
intervention

posttraumatic stress disorder

partner abuse
domestic violence
intimate partner violence
battered females

- Redo your search combining all the database subject terms you found:

therapy or psychotherapy or treatment or counseling or intervention AND “posttraumatic stress disorder” AND “partner abuse” or “domestic violence” or “intimate partner violence”

Searching in discovery databases: EMU's Esearch and Google Scholar

- The items in discovery databases are not individually examined by humans and no standard vocabulary is applied to describe the contents of the database
- When searching discovery databases, you are responsible for being alert and attentive to the vocabulary used by others to describe the topics you are investigating
- If you started by searching in a traditional academic database, make a list of the database subject vocabulary used to describe your topic, as well as any other synonymous words/phrases you saw being used by the authors of the items in the database results list

therapy psychotherapy treatment counseling intervention	posttraumatic stress disorder ptsd	spouse abuse partner abuse domestic violence intimate partner violence battered females
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- If the discovery database offers an Advanced search screen, as does EMU's *Esearch*, use that screen to enter your search as you would in a traditional academic database [Capitalize the OR connector]
- If you use a discovery database basic single search box, such as in *Google Scholar* or *Google*, follow a different search-term entry strategy: pick one word or phrase for EACH of your main topics and type them into the single search box of the discovery tool, one following the other, without any additional punctuation:

therapy posttraumatic stress disorder spouse abuse

- Review your results

NOTE: If the results do not look very relevant, try putting quotes around each of your topics that is a **multi-word phrase**, e.g.

therapy "posttraumatic stress disorder" "spouse abuse"

- If you found enough material to answer your question, you are done
- If you did not find enough, replace one topical word/phrase at a time in the search box and review the result list after each change:

therapy "posttraumatic stress disorder" "partner abuse"

therapy "posttraumatic stress disorder" "domestic violence"

therapy "posttraumatic stress disorder" "intimate partner violence"

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intervention ptsd "partner abuse"

intervention ptsd "domestic violence"