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# ADVANCED WRITING: RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

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THERE ARE TWO HURDLES IN RESEARCH THAT IF OVERCOME MAKE RESEARCH MUCH EASIER:

## NARROW YOUR TOPIC

Remember that most research questions need to be very narrow. A narrow topic makes research easier by limiting the amount of information you get and it also helps you write a better paper because you can more easily cover a narrow topic.

To determine if your question is narrow enough ask yourself:

Who? -- Who am I talking about? What groups or types of people are involved?

What? -- What am I going to talk about? What particular aspect of this topic am I interested in?

When? -- When does my topic take place? Am I going to look at historical items or just current ones?

Where? -- Where does my topic take place? Is there a certain location I am going to look at?

Why? -- Why am I trying to answer this question? Why does this question need an answer?

How? -- How am I going to focus my topic? Am I writing a persuasive paper or just looking at a topic?

The answers to these questions will help you focus in on a specific topic.

*How can teachers help handicapped students* is too broad --- "*How can teachers use cooperative learning techniques in an inclusive classroom to better serve the learning styles of learning disabled students?*" is a narrow topic.

## FIND THE RIGHT TERMINOLOGY

It is important to find the right words to use in a computer database search that will get you the right information. Here are some tips on how to go about finding the right terms to use in a search:

1. Brainstorm. Think of different ways of talking about the same concept. For example a type of learning disability is dyslexia, so I should probably use both words in my search with a Boolean operator "or" between them to find everything
2. Use the thesaurus. If the database you are using has one, use the thesaurus. It will help you find the right terminology as well as define terms, give you different terms that talk about the same concept, and help you to do searches
3. Don't be discouraged if you can't find information using the words that you have identified. Keep trying until you find the right ones, or go to the reference desk or contact the subject librarian for help.

## A FEW RESEARCH TIPS



Use encyclopedias or general sources if you need background information on our topic

- Browse the print encyclopedias in the social science/education reference collection on level one
- Use the Gale Virtual Reference Library from the library home page under Find Other Materials / Encyclopedias: Specialized



Getting articles from the databases you search may involve several steps

- Full text articles may be found directly in many databases
- If the full text is not there, try the Get it at BYU button which will:
  - Look to see if the article is full text in another database
  - Look to see if the HBLL has the journal in print, then it will give you a link to the call number where it is found in the periodicals room on the second level
  - It will give you a link to Interlibrary Loan where you can fill out a form and the staff there will get you a copy



Print/Save/E-mail/Export

- When you find items you want save them using the add folder or the small mark boxes
- You then have the option of:
  - Printing the article citations and in some cases the full text if available
  - Saving the article citations to a flash drive
  - E-mailing the article citations and any articles that are full text in the database to your self.
  - Exporting the article citations to a bibliography generator program like Refworks



Ask for Help

- At the Social Science/Education Reference desk on level one
- Contact the subject librarian
  - Rachel Wadham,
    - Rachel\_Wadham@byu.edu
    - 422-6780
    - 1223 HBLL