

## Advanced Writing Podcast Two Finding Terminology

Finding information for a project, research paper, or for any other purpose can be a daunting task, but with a few tricks and tips the whole process is much easier.

If you have listened to library instruction for education student's podcast one you will have learned about narrowing your topic. This is the number one thing that causes people problems with research. In this podcast we are going to learn about the number two thing that causes problems and that is finding the right terminology.

English (or any language for that matter) is complex. You can talk about all kinds of things in all different kinds of ways. For example if you are talking about the black piece of ground that you drive a car on you might call it a road, or a street, or a lane, or a highway, or a freeway. Get the idea? In fact all of those words are the right words they just have different contexts. When you search for information you come across the same problem. When you want to search a topic in a library database the first thing you have to determine is what is the right terminology and you have to determine if there are any alternative forms that you could use. In education we use very specific terms to talk about different types of things, many of these are common but sometimes they are not so common. For example you are probably familiar with the common term Mainstreaming but are you familiar with the term Heterogeneous Grouping? Both terms have to do with how disabled or gifted students are taught but they both have different contexts.

In order to search library databases you need to have the right terms and you also need to include any possible terms that mean the same thing to get the right information. While sometimes it may be challenging to find all the right terms, here are three tips on how to go about identifying terms for your search.

First, Brainstorm. As you brainstorm think of different ways of talking about the same concept. For example if you are doing research on learning disabilities you may want to include terms that describe specific types of disabilities such as dyslexia. Or you may want to describe things more specifically, for example dyslexia is a reading difficulty so you may want to use the term reading difficulty. All of these terms describe similar things so you should probably use all these terms in your search with a Boolean operator "or" between them to find everything

Second, use encyclopedias. Try looking up your topic in the print encyclopedias in the social science/education reference collections on level one or try the Gale Virtual Reference Library that you can connect to from the library homepage. By reading these types of sources you will be able to get good examples of what types of terms are used in an area. Look in the encyclopedia's index if you can to see what other terms are used in association to the term you looked up. Also in the text of the articles look for key phrases that indicate that a topic is talked about in many ways. For example an article may say "the term "mainstreaming" has been superseded by the term "inclusion," reflecting a new understanding of Least Restrictive Environment" (From: Noyes-Grosser, Donna M. "Mainstreaming." Child Development. Ed. Neil

J. Salkind. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2002. 245. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIV. 17 June 2008 <[http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=GVRL&u=byu\\_main](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=GVRL&u=byu_main)>.) So in this case you would know that Mainstreaming and Inclusion are two terms you should use in your search with a Boolean operator “or” between them to find everything.

Third, use the thesaurus. If the database you are using has one, use the thesaurus. The library databases ERIC and Education Full Text both have a thesaurus. Look for the links to the thesaurus on the main pages of the search screens of these databases. Searching using the thesaurus will help you find the right terminology. If the term is not the right term the thesaurus will lead you to the right ones. In addition it will also define terms, give you different terms that talk about the same concept, and help you to do searches. Take some time to play around with the thesaurus, they are pretty easy to use and they can really help.

So one of the important things you can do for searches in the library databases is to ensure that you have the right terminology. I hope some of these tips can help you find the right words, but don't be discouraged if you can't find information using the words that you have identified. It is important to keep trying until you find the right ones. Give the tips a try but if you are still discouraged don't hesitate to go to the reference desk or contact the librarian for help. We're here to help at any stage of the research process so don't hesitate to ask.