

The Research Process

a step by step guide



Module 2: Investigating and Refining a Topic



Ocean County
College Library
Toms River, NJ

Spring 2010

This Module is the continuation of the Research Process Guide and will cover:

- Step 4: Investigating a topic
- Step 5: Refining a topic

Feel free to go through the modules
at your own pace



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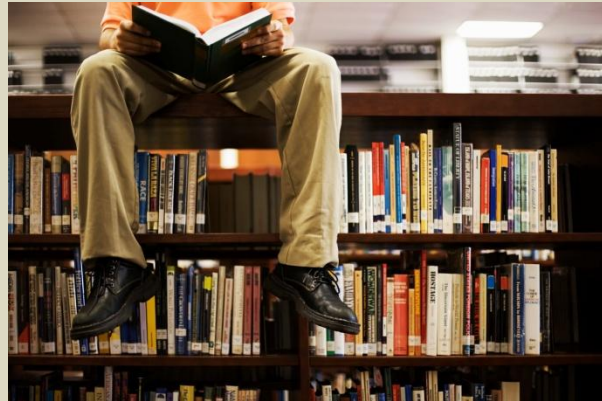


And remember you can
stop by the library for
further assistance on any of
the topics covered.

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Start by conducting preliminary research to see what information is available. This may help you develop a research plan.



Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Try to find out:

- What books are available in your library?
- What books are available in other libraries?
- Which subscription databases seem to have relevant and appropriate articles?

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Locating Books in the OCC Catalog

Welcome

Find Information

Find Books & Movies

Find Articles

Research Help

- Start by accessing the OCC Library homepage:

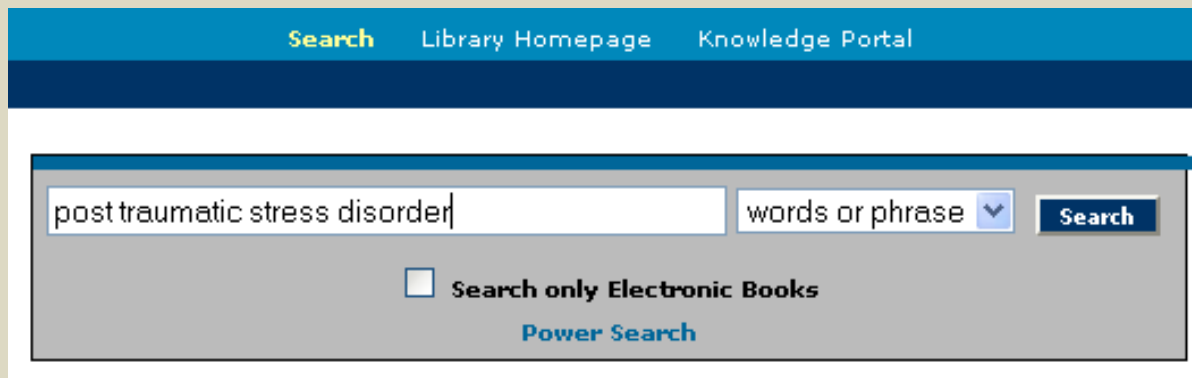
<http://www.ocean.edu/library/welcome.html>

- Click the “Find Books and Movies” link

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Locating Books in the OCC Catalog

This will take you to the ***OCC Catalog***. You can search here for books, Ebooks, media items (like videos and CDs), as well as print periodicals



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the OCC Catalog website. It includes links for "Search", "Library Homepage", and "Knowledge Portal". Below the navigation bar is a search form with a text input field containing "post traumatic stress disorder", a dropdown menu set to "words or phrase", and a "Search" button. Below the search form is a checkbox labeled "Search only Electronic Books" and a "Power Search" link.

Search Library Homepage Knowledge Portal

post traumatic stress disorder words or phrase Search

Search only Electronic Books

Power Search

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Locating Articles in the OCC Databases

If you are **ON** campus:

- Access the OCC Library homepage
- Click the “Find Articles” link

Welcome

Find Information

Find Books & Movies

Find Articles

Research Help



Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

Locating Articles in the OCC Databases

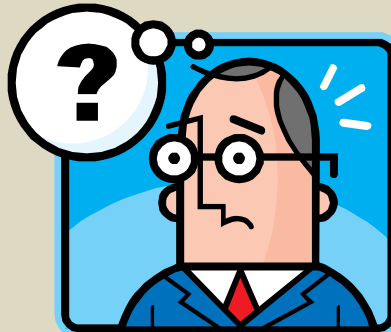
If you are **OFF** campus:



- Log in to Ocean Cruiser
- Click the “Announcements” icon
- Then select “Access Library Databases From Off-Campus”

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

How Do I Choose a Database?



Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

How Do I Choose a Database?

No two databases are the same. They vary by:

- Subject matter
- Resource type
- Access options

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No two databases are the same. They vary by:

- Subject matter
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For example, a general database, like Academic Search Premier, is multi-disciplinary and covers many subjects.

But a specific database, like PsychARTICLES, is focused on psychology resources.

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

How Do I Choose a Database?

No two databases are the same. They vary by:

- Subject matter
- **Resource type** —
- Access options

For example, a reference database, like Facts on File, provides access to many encyclopedic entries.

But a research database, like JSTOR, provides access to academic articles.

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

How Do I Choose a Database?

No two databases are the same. They vary by:

- Subject matter
- Resource type
- Access options

Some databases provide access to articles in HTML or PDF format.

Others provide access to images or multimedia.

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

How Do I Choose a Database?

So... when choosing a database, consider:

- **Your subject matter**
(is there a specific database geared to that subject?)
- **What type of information you need**
(general information? Academic articles? multimedia resources?)

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

How Do I Choose a Database?

And remember...

You can always ask a librarian to help you choose a database.



Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

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Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

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- Too **broad** (there is a lot of research and on multiple topic aspects),

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

After your preliminary research, you may realize your topic is either

- Too **broad** (there is a lot of research and on multiple topic aspects),
or
- Too **narrow** (there is little research, or research is on more general topic aspects)

Fourth Step: Investigating a topic

In that case, you may need
to refine your topic

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

To refine a topic, start by asking:

“What is my research purpose?”

“What do I really need to find out?”

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Let's refer back to our example assignment:

In this assignment, you will research Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans. Research the history of the disorder, as well as its causes, symptoms, and treatments.

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Let's refer back to our example assignment:

In this assignment, you will research Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans. Research the history of the disorder, as well as its causes, symptoms, and treatments.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can be a broad topic. There is a lot of research focusing on different aspects of the disorder.

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Let's refer back to our example assignment:

In this assignment, you will research Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among veterans. Research the history of the disorder, as well as its causes, symptoms, and treatments.

Sometimes, you'll need to refine the topic yourself by determining what *specifically* you want to research about a broad topic .

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Let's refer back to our example assignment:

Luckily, this professor has refined the topic for you:

- To a specific population (veterans)
- To specific aspects (history, causes, symptoms, treatments)

(Note: you may still have to refine the topic further,



depending on your thesis and purpose...)

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

A simple keyword search in the PsychARTICLES database produces *hundreds* of results on a wide range of topic aspects:

- PTSD in children
- PTSD in lab rats
- PTSD in different cultures...

Narrow Results by

- Subject: Major Heading
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
 - Emotional Trauma
 - Military Veterans
 - Trauma
 - Autobiographical Memory
 - Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Age
- Gender
- Subject
- Publication

More »

Results: 1-10 of 790 Page: 1 2 3 4 5 Next

Sort by: Relevance

Results for: posttraumatic stress disorder

Search Mode: Boolean/Phrase

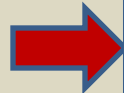
- "The MMPI-2 Restructured Clinical Scales in the assessment of posttraumatic stress disorder and comorbid disorders": Correction.
Wolf, Erika J.; Miller, Mark W.; Orazem, Robert J.; Weierich, Mariann R.; Castillo, Diana Milford, Jaime; Kaloupek, Danny G.; Keane, Terence M.; Psychological Assessment, Vol 21, Mar, 2009, pp. 135. [Erratum/Correction] Correction to: The MMPI-2 Restructured Clinical Scales in the Assessment of *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* and Comorbid *Disorders*.
Database: PsycARTICLES
Add to folder Relevancy: ██████████
HTML Full Text PDF Full Text (23K)
- Cognitive appraisals and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in informal care of stroke survivors.
Carek, Victoria; Norman, Paul; Barton, Jane; Rehabilitation Psychology, Vol 55(1), Feb 2008, pp. 91-96. [Journal Article]
Database: PsycARTICLES
Add to folder Relevancy: ██████████ Cited References: (42)
HTML Full Text PDF Full Text (74K)
- Comparison of immediate-onset and delayed-onset posttraumatic stress disorder in military veterans.
Andrews, Bernice; Brewin, Chris R.; Stewart, Lorna; Philpott, Rosanna; Hejdenberg, J.

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

One way to refine this search is to focus on a specific group of patients. In our case, veterans.

This database lets you choose that option from the list, but you can also narrow by adding the term “veterans” to your search:

“posttraumatic stress disorder AND veterans”



The screenshot shows a search interface with a sidebar on the left and a main results area on the right.

Narrow Results by

- Subject: Major Heading
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
 - Emotional Trauma
 - Military Veterans**
 - Trauma
 - Autobiographical Memory
 - Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Age
- Gender
- Subject
- Publication

Results: 1-10 of 790 Page: 1 2 3 4 5 Next Sort by: Relevance

Results for: posttraumatic stress disorder

- ["The MMPI-2 Restructured Clinical Scales in the assessment of posttraumatic stress disorder and comorbid disorders": Correction.](#)
Wolf, Erika J.; Miller, Mark W.; Orazem, Robert J.; Weierich, Mariann R.; Castillo, Diana Milford, Jaime; Kaloupek, Danny G.; Keane, Terence M.; Psychological Assessment, Vol 21, Mar, 2009, pp. 135. [Erratum/Correction] Correction to: The MMPI-2 Restructured Clinical Scales in the Assessment of *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* and Comorbid *Disorders*.
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Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████
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- [Cognitive appraisals and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in informal care of stroke survivors.](#)
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- [Comparison of immediate-onset and delayed-onset posttraumatic stress disorder in military veterans.](#)
Andrews, Bernice; Brewin, Chris R.; Stewart, Lorna; Philpott, Rosanna; Hejdenberg, J.

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

This *refined* search produces fewer results that are more focused to the research need.

You can continue to refine your search by “and-ing” terms like “symptoms” or “treatment” to your search.

“posttraumatic stress disorder AND veterans AND symptoms”

Narrow Results by

- Subject: Major Heading
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
 - Combat Experience
 - War
 - Emotional Trauma
 - Marital Relations
 - Stress Reactions
- Age
- Gender
- Subject
- Publication

More »

Results: 1-10 of 112 Page: 1 2 3 4 5 Next

Sort by: Relevance Add (1-10)

Results for: **posttraumatic stress disorder + Military Veterans** Alert / Save / Share »

Search Mode: Boolean/Phrase

- [Comparison of immediate-onset and delayed-onset posttraumatic stress disorder in military veterans.](#)
Andrews, Bernice; Brewin, Chris R.; Stewart, Lorna; Philpott, Rosanna; Hejdenberg, Jennie; Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Vol 118(4), Nov, 2009. pp. 767-777. [Journal Article]
Database: PsycARTICLES
Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████ | Cited References: (42) | Times Cited in this Database: (1)
HTML Full Text PDF Full Text (88K)
- [Posttraumatic stress disorder and standardized test-taking ability.](#)
Rutkowski, Leslie; Vasterling, Jennifer J.; Proctor, Susan P.; Anderson, Carolyn J.; Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol 102(1), Feb, 2010. pp. 223-233. [Journal Article]
Database: PsycARTICLES
Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████ | Cited References: (61)
HTML Full Text PDF Full Text (135K)
- [Cognitive processing therapy for veterans with military-related posttraumatic stress disorder.](#)
Monson, Candice M.; Schnurr, Paula P.; Resick, Patricia A.; Friedman, Matthew J.; Young-Xu, Yinong; Stevens, Susan P.; Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, Vol 74(5), Oct, 2006. Special issue: Benefit-Finding. pp. 898-907. [Journal Article]
Database: PsycARTICLES
Add to folder | Relevancy: ██████████ | Cited References: (54) | Times Cited in this Database: (7)
HTML Full Text PDF Full Text (125K)

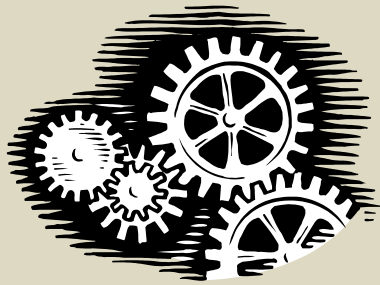
Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Tips for developing and refining a topic:

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Tips for developing and refining a topic:

1. Consider the main concepts of your topic



Research topics are often complex.
are usually more than one concept or
topic aspect to consider

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Tips for developing and refining a topic:

2. Identify important issues related to your topic:



- Important events
- Key researchers and questions
- Controversies

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Tips for developing and refining a topic:

2. Develop a list of related concepts and terms

Terms	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	Veterans	Symptoms
Related terms/ concepts	PTSD Anxiety disorder Emotional trauma Combat experience	Military veterans Combat veterans Soldiers Service personnel	Behavior Psychiatric symptoms



Tip! Many databases provide a thesaurus to help you identify related concepts and terms.

Fifth Step: Refining a topic

Tips for developing and refining a topic:

Your list of related concepts and terms will help you during your search by giving you other useful keywords and related subject matter.

You can explore this further in the [OCC Search Strategies Guide!](#)

Congratulations!

You've completed Module 2!

Next, explore the Search Strategies Guide
to become a more powerful searcher...



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