**RESEARCH SKILLS EXERCISE**

**STEP 1:** Write a research statement that describes your topic, or write a question that you would like your research to answer:


**STEP 2:** Identify key concepts for your topic and choose search terms.

Brainstorm for *keywords* and *key phrases* that express the major concepts or issues involved, including synonyms and related terms.

*Example: Topic/Prompt and Keywords*

**Topic/Prompt:** To what extent, if any, is the fast food industry responsible for American obesity?

**Concepts:** fast food, obesity, Americans.

**Keywords and key phrases for related issues:** obesity epidemic, diet, nutrition, children, adults, fast food marketing, advertising, schools, television, “junk food,” diabetes, heart disease, exercise, lawsuits, McDonald’s.

What are the key concepts for your research question (Use the question you wrote in Step #1.) (usually 2 or 3 concepts)?

_______________________   ________________________   ________________________

Choose *search terms* for your key concepts. List alternate terms where possible--think about synonyms, broader terms, and narrower terms for each concept.

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<th>Terms for Concept 1</th>
<th>Terms for Concept 2</th>
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STEP 3: Choose an article index (database) to search for articles on your research topic.

1) Select a database that was demonstrated, or one of your own choosing.

2) Write the name of the database you selected: ____________________________

STEPS 4 & 5:

Create database search strategies by combining a search term for each key concept with and. Use the advanced search if this makes it easier for you. Keep track of your search strategies so you will know which search terms work and which do not.

Use combinations of keywords that represent the key concepts you are interested in. Remember to join your key words and key phrases together with "and."

Sample Keyword Searches

fast food and obesity; fast food and lawsuits; obesity and children; schools and fast food; fast food and advertising and television

Conduct a search in the article index database you selected. What search strategy seemed to find the most relevant citations or articles? It is typical to try several search strategies (i.e. combinations of keywords) before you find one that retrieves the most relevant articles.

Successful search strategies: _____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Were there any combinations of words that did NOT work as well? Write those here:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
**RESEARCH SKILLS EXERCISE**

**STEP 6:** Write down at least one relevant citation from your database search.

| Author: | __________________________________________________________________________________ |
| Article title: | __________________________________________________________________________________ |
| Journal/magazine/newspaper title: | __________________________________________________________________________________ |
| Volume number: | _______________ | Issue number: | _______________ |
| Date of publication: | _______________ | Page numbers: | _______________ |

**STEP 7:** Write two reasons why this article might be useful for your research project:

1)___________________________________________________________________________

2)___________________________________________________________________________

**STEP 8:** Retrieve the article you selected

Is the article available in full-text in the article index database?  YES  NO

If YES, then you can email, download, or print it from the database. You’re finished!

If NO (i.e. only a citation or abstract is available), try the Find It button to search for the article in another database.

Note: If we have the journal, be sure to check whether we have the specific volume and issue you need. If you need help finding the article, ask a librarian!