Name: _________________________________________________________________________________

PSYC 3341 – Research Methods – Dr. Tennial  
Search Preparation Worksheet  
Created by John Siegel, MLS, AHIP – Associate Professor of Library Science

TIP: Be sure to review the General “Tips and Tricks” for Searching on the back side/second page of this handout BEFORE you complete this worksheet.

1. Write your research question. [This is just for practice. Your research question for your proposal may change.]

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

2. From your research question above, write the major concepts (either single words or short phrases) below.

Major concept #1: ____________________________________________________________

Major concept #2: ____________________________________________________________

Major concept #3 (if applicable): _______________________________________________

Major concept #4 (if applicable): _______________________________________________

3. For each of your major concepts, write several synonyms or other search terms that might be useful for searching. This is a beginning list – you may add to it later.
   a. HINT: Consider using Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) and Psychology Wiki (psychology.wikia.com) to come up with synonyms/alternate terms.

  Synonyms for major concept #1:
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________

  Synonyms for major concept #2:
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________

  Synonyms for major concept #3 (if applicable):
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________

  Synonyms for major concept #4 (if applicable):
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________

*SEARCH PREPARATION WORKSHEET CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE*
4. Using your major concepts and synonyms, write several search statements that you will use to search for research resources.

a. ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________
   Major concept #1  Major concept #2  Major concept #3  Major concept #4
   (if applies)     (if applies)

b. ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________
   Synonym for   Synonym for   Synonym for   Synonym for
   Major concept #1  Major concept #2  Major concept #3  Major concept #4
   (if applies)     (if applies)

c. Another search I may try (HINT: Mix and match your major concepts and synonyms):
   ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________
   (if applies)     (if applies)

d. Another search I may try (HINT: Mix and match your major concepts and synonyms):
   ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________ AND ___________________
   (if applies)     (if applies)

General “Tips and Tricks” for Searching

• When searching, keeping it simple and taking time to think about your search terms will give you better results!

EXAMPLE:

Research Question: “How does social support impact depression levels among the elderly LGBT community?”

Major concept #1: social support   Major concept #2: depression   Major concept #3: elderly   Major concept #4: LGBT

Search statement: social support AND depression AND elderly AND LGBT

Synonyms: friendship, mental health, aging, seniors, homosexuality, gay men, lesbian, bisexual, transgender

Other search statements: friendship AND depression AND aging AND homosexuality
                      social support AND mental health AND aging AND gay men
                      social support AND depression AND LGBT

Key Points:

➤ Leave off words that are implied or that do not add meaning, such as a, an, in, the, on, of, off, does.
➤ Focus on major concepts, which are single words or short phrases. Short phrases are usually 2-3 words.
➤ Avoid entering your entire question or part of your question (word for word) as your search. This confuses the database. In the example above, you would not want to search for ‘How does social support impact depression levels among the elderly LGBT community’ or ‘social support LGBT elderly.’
➤ Remember that databases only search the identifying information of an article and the abstract (short description/summary), not the entire article, so you have to be creative with your search terms.
➤ Brainstorm synonyms and think broader and narrower. In the example above, note one of the synonyms listed is mental health. Articles that discuss mental health may address depression, even though depression is not mentioned in the title or abstract.
➤ “Buzzwords,” lingo, and acronyms are not used by everyone and may vary. In the example above, note the synonyms for LGBT – homosexuality, gay men, lesbian, bisexual, transgender.
➤ If you have three or more major concepts, you may need to broaden your search by leaving off a concept. In the example above, note the ‘other search statement’ above that does not include major concept #3, elderly. There may be articles on social support and depression among LGBT individuals that may address the elderly, even though elderly is not mentioned in the title or abstract.

*END OF SEARCH PREPARATION WORKSHEET*