

Library Research Skills for Psychology Students

Augustana Campus Library

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY



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Introduction

Welcome to Library Research Skills for Psychology Students! This tutorial was designed for undergraduate students in psychology courses at the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus.

I'm Kara Blizzard, a librarian at the Augustana Campus Library. You are welcome to ask me questions about all kinds of things related to research and the library.

Learning Objectives

As a psychology student, a key part of your role is to find relevant information on the topics you are studying. In this tutorial, you will learn how to:

- Choose a topic and narrow it down to a research question
- Identify the pertinent concepts in your question
- Find relevant articles using the database PsycINFO
- Cite your sources using APA style

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Identifying Key Concepts

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Using APA Style

How to Navigate This Tutorial

Use any of these options:

- View the "Contents" menu in the top left to see each section and its chapters
- Use the left and right arrow keys on your keyboard to move between chapters
- Use the **blue navigation buttons** at the very bottom

of your browser window to move between chapters

First, we will consider how to identify a research topic and turn it into a question.

PART I STARTING A RESEARCH PROJECT

Research Topics & Questions

You might be assigned a topic for a research assignment, or you might need to come up with one on your own. Here is an example of a broad topic:

Marijuana and cognition

Before trying to find scholarly articles on a topic like this one, it is important to narrow it down to a more manageable research question. Consider what aspects of the topic interest you. This can involve reading about the topic in your course textbook or searching for background information through Google, for example.

Let's say I'm interested in exploring academic performance and marijuana use. A relevant research question might be:

Does using marijuana affect university students' grades?

This question is much more specific than the initial topic of marijuana and cognition.

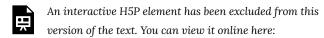
Next we will explore how to identify the key concepts in a research question.

Identifying Key Concepts

Once you have a research question, identifying its key concepts or key terms can help you figure out what words to use when you search for information. A focused research question usually has about three key concepts.

You might also find it helpful to think about what synonyms or related terms could be used to describe the different concepts. For example, if you were researching the concept of grades, related terms could include academic performance or academic achievement.

Check Your Understanding



https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=26#h5p-2

In the next section, we'll explore where you can search for information on your research question.

PART II SEARCHING FOR **INFORMATION**

Where to Search

Depending where you search, you will find different types of information sources. The table below shows some examples of places to search and what you might find there.

| Place to Search | What It Is | What You Might Find |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Google, Bing, etc. | A search engine | Wide variety of source types of varying quality. Sources like Wikipedia can be useful for getting initial context on your topic, but most search results will not be considered scholarly. |
| Search the Library | A search box on the library homepage that searches the library catalogue and about 300 databases | Scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles, news and magazine articles, book reviews, films, and some other types of sources. |
| PsycINFO | A subject-specific database that focuses on psychology | Primarily peer-reviewed journal articles, some scholarly book chapters and dissertations. |

Because of PsycINFO's strong coverage of psychology research, it is the main database to use for most psychology topics. It and other potentially relevant databases are listed in Augustana Library's Psychology Subject Guide.

In the next section, you'll learn how to search PsycINFO effectively.

PART III USING PSYCINFO

Step 1: Searching for Concepts

How to Use PsycINFO

Searching PsycINFO requires multiple steps. In this part of the tutorial, there are chapters on each step of the process:

Step 1: Searching for concepts (current chapter)

Step 2: Combining your searches

Step 3: Limiting search results

Step 4: Viewing and accessing results

Step 5: Exporting your search history

Step 1: Searching for Concepts

PsycINFO works best if you start by searching for each of your concepts separately. This is because the database uses controlled vocabulary, which means it assigns specific terms to concepts. These terms are called Subject Headings. Searching for one concept at a time allows you to search PsycINFO's thesaurus for any matching Subject Headings.

Why does PsycINFO use Subject Headings?

Different authors might use different words or phrases to describe the same concept. Subject Headings help you find all of the articles relevant to a particular concept, regardless of what words individual authors used in their articles.

1. Starting a PsycINFO Search

First, open PsycINFO.

Start by **searching for one of your concepts** on the Advanced Search page. For example, the search below uses the term *marijuana*. A single concept might be more than one word (e.g., *mental health*). Make sure the "Map Term to Subject Heading" option is checked off; this will search PsycINFO's thesaurus for your term.



2. Reviewing the List of Subject Headings

The results will show a list of Subject Headings that may be relevant to your term. If you do not see any relevant Subject Headings, try searching again with a different term. At the bottom of the list, there will always be the option to search for your term as a keyword. In

most cases, you should only use this option if you are sure there are no relevant Subject Headings for your concept.

In the example below, Marijuana is at the top of the list, and a few other potential matches are included as well. For some terms there will only be one matching result, and it might be the exact term you entered.

Click on the linked term that seems most relevant; you can note any others to add to your search later.

| Select | Subject Heading |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| ✓ | <u>Marijuana</u> |
| | <u>Marijuana Laws</u> |
| | Marijuana Legalization |
| | <u>Marijuana Usage</u> |
| | marijuana.mp. search as Keyword |

3. Choosing Additional Subject Heading(s)

Clicking on one of the Subject Headings brings up a thesaurus page that shows the relationship between this term and other PsycINFO Subject Headings. It can be really useful for finding more terms to add to your search.

In the example below, the first section ("Used For") shows that Marijuana is used instead of an alternate spelling of the term. This page also includes the broader term Cannabis and a list of related terms that may be relevant. For example, Marijuana Usage could be useful here. For some Subject Headings, there may also be a "Narrower Terms" section that shows more specific terms for the subject.

If you want to **add any term(s) from the thesaurus to your search**, click on the checkbox to its left. Then **click on the "Continue" button** at the top of the page.

| ~ | Ma | arijuana | | | |
|----------|----|-----------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| | | [Used For] | | | |
| | | | <u>Marihuana</u> | | |
| | | [Broader Terms] | | | |
| | | | Cannabis | | |
| | | [Related Terms] | | | |
| | | | Cannabis Use Disorder | | |
| | | | <u>Hashish</u> | | |
| | | | Marijuana Laws [+NT] | | |
| | | | Marijuana Legalization | | |
| | | | Marijuana Usage | | |
| | | | <u>Tetrahydrocannabinol</u> | | |

4. Searching for All of Your Concepts

Repeat steps 1 to 3 for each of your concepts. You may choose to do multiple searches for a single concept if there are multiple relevant Subject Headings.

Note: If one of your concepts is an age group, like children, infants, or seniors, it will not be a Subject Heading in the thesaurus. Just search for each of your other concepts, and later you will be able to limit the search results to a particular age group.

Click on each of the three concepts below to see examples of the process I used when researching the question, "Does using marijuana affect university students' grades?".



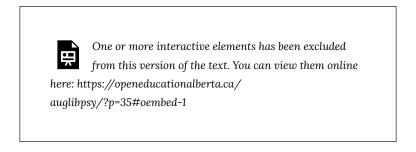
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https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=35#h5p-3

Each time you complete a search, a new line will be added to the search history at the top of the Search page. Below is an example of what a search history might look like after you finish searching for each of your concepts in the thesaurus.

| ▼ Search History (4) | | |
|--|--------|--|
| □ # ▲ Searches | | |
| ☐ 1 marijuana/ | | |
| ☐ 2 marijuana usage/ | | |
| ☐ 3 college students/ or community college students/ | | |
| academic achievement/ or college academic achieve | ement/ | |

Video Demo: Searching for Concepts



Check Your Understanding

Use PsycINFO to help you answer the next two questions.

Question 1



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https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=35#h5p-4

Question 2



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https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=35#h5p-7

Stepping Up Your Search: "Explode" and "Focus"

When you search for Subject Headings in PsycINFO, you can choose to select "Explode" and/or "Focus" for each

relevant term. (If you are just getting started with PsycINFO, e.g., in AUPSY 103, I suggest disregarding these.)

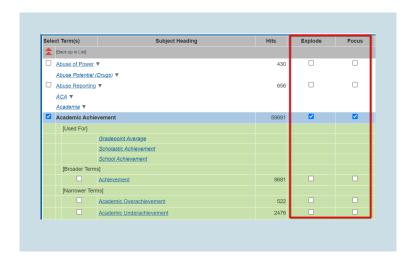
Explode

Selecting "Explode" will add any of the narrower terms for the Subject Heading and connect them with OR. In the below example, this would mean: **Academic Achievement OR Academic Overachievement OR Academic Underachievement OR** ... any of the other narrower terms. The Explode function makes a search broader.

If a Subject Heading does not have any narrower terms, using the Explode function will not do anything.

Focus

Selecting "Focus" means that search results must have this Subject Heading as a major focus of the article. This function makes a search narrower; it decreases the number of results.



Next we will look at how to combine your searches to find articles on your topic.

Step 2: Combining Your Searches

Search Principles in Other Databases

In most library databases—but not PsycINFO!—searching works best if you connect your key terms together using AND and OR to tell the database how to group the terms. For example:

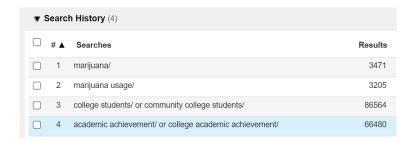
marijuana AND university students AND (grades OR academic achievement)

For more information on combining search terms, watch the Putting a Search Together video.

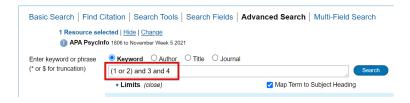
Search Principles in PsycINFO

In PsycINFO, instead of typing out a search string like the example above, you should **combine your initial Subject Heading searches using their numbers in the search history**.

Here is an example PsycINFO search history. The numbers in the "Results" column show how many matching articles there are for each search.



To combine the searches, you can use the numbers given on the left side of the search history and enter them into the Advanced Search box using AND, OR, and parentheses to connect them. Similar searches should be connected with OR and put in parentheses, and searches for different concepts should be connected with AND. Here is an example of how the searches above could be combined:

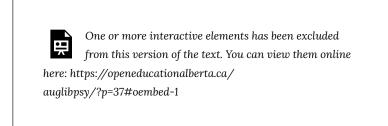


Once you combine your searches, another line will be added to the search history. The number of results should be much lower than those for your initial Subject Heading searches. For example, the search below shows only 17 results when all of the initial Subject Heading searches are combined.

| ▼ Search History (5) | | | |
|----------------------|-----|--|---------|
| | # 🛦 | Searches | Results |
| | 1 | marijuana/ | 3471 |
| | 2 | marijuana usage/ | 3205 |
| | 3 | college students/ or community college students/ | 86564 |
| | 4 | academic achievement/ or college academic achievement/ | 66480 |
| | 5 | (1 or 2) and 3 and 4 | 17 |

Now you can scroll down the page and start to look at the search results. If you don't find relevant articles the first time, try changing the way you search. **Try combining different sets of terms to see what retrieves the best results**. Consider using broader or narrower Subject Headings or adding related terms to your search.

Video Demo: Combining Your Searches



Check Your Understanding

Imagine you are researching whether exposure therapy is an

effective treatment for phobias. Use this example search history to answer the two questions below.





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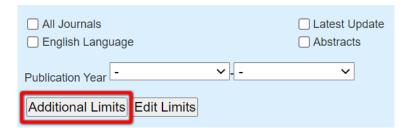
https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=37#h5p-9

In the next section, we'll explore how to add relevant limits to your search results.

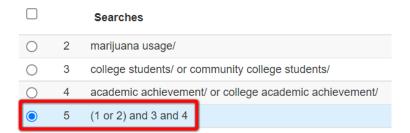
Step 3: Limiting Search Results

Like many databases, PsycINFO allows you to limit your search results to particular types of sources. You can limit by publication type, age group, and more. You should add limits after you have searched for each of your concepts separately and combined them into a search that seems to have promising results.

To add limits, **click on the Additional Limits button** under the search box on the Advanced Search page.



By default, limits will be applied to your most recent search. You can change this by selecting the search you want to limit at the top of the Limits page.



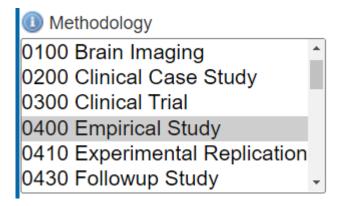
The Limits page has many different options, but you will likely only need to use a few for your research. Consider adding limits to

Methodology, Publication Types, and Age Groups (if relevant). We will explore each of these below.

Note: Do not use the "full text" limits! These will exclude results that you actually can access through our U of A subscriptions.

Methodology

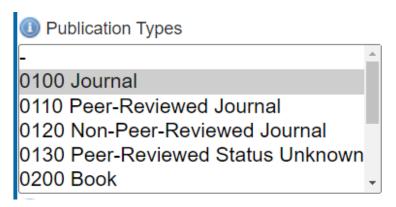
In the Methodology section you can choose a specific type of research, such as an Empirical Study or a Literature Review. This is a really useful feature that most other databases do not have.



Publication Types

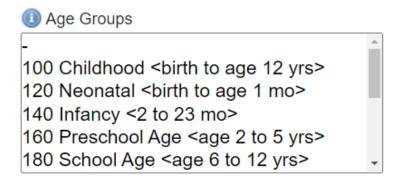
You can also limit the results to specific types of publications. In

most cases, you will want to choose Journal. I suggest this instead of "Peer-reviewed Journal" because if PsycINFO does not know the peer review status for a certain journal, you might end up excluding a relevant result.



Age Groups

If your research question relates to a particular age group, consider adding this limit.



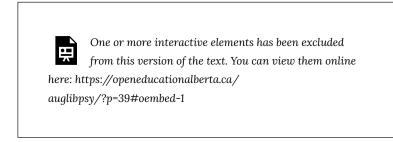
You can select multiple options within any of the above categories by choosing one, holding the Ctrl button (on a Windows computer), and selecting another.

Limiting Your Search

Once you have finished selecting limits, click on the "Limit a Search" button at the bottom or top of the page. This will add a new line to your search history with fewer results than before, like in the example below.

| 5 | (1 or 2) and 3 and 4 | 17 |
|---|--|----|
| 6 | limit 5 to ("0400 empirical study" and "0100 journal") | 11 |

Video Demo: Limiting Search Results

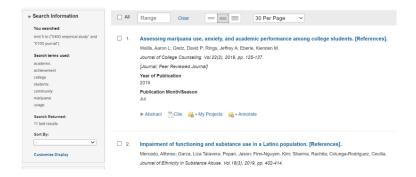


| Next you will learn how to view and access relevant search results. |
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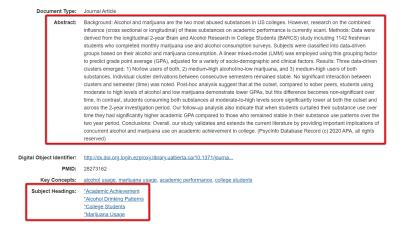
Step 4: Viewing & Accessing Results

Viewing Search Results

Scroll down the search page to see the results of your most recent search.



Clicking on an article's title will take you to its record, which includes more details about the article. Reading the abstract can help you decide whether the article is relevant, and looking at the Subject Headings can give you ideas of more terms to add to your search.



Accessing Articles

There are two common ways you may be able to access articles. Sometimes the full text is available within PsycINFO; if so, there is a "Full Text" link next to the article in the search results and in the article's record.



If there is no Full Text link, click on the green "Get It @ UAlberta" button, which will open a page that shows where you can access the article. Most articles are available online, either on the journal's website or in another library database.

If you have trouble accessing an article, please feel free to ask us for help.

Video Demo: Viewing & Accessing Results



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here: https://openeducationalberta.ca/ auglibpsy/?p=182#oembed-1

The next section will show you how to save your PsycINFO search history.

Step 5: Saving Your Search History

You might want to save your search history to keep a record of it for yourself, or you might need to submit it for a course assignment.

Saving Your List of Searches

If you just want to save the list of searches that you did, underneath your searches click on either "Email All Search History" to email it to yourself or "Copy Search History Details" to paste it into a document.

 $\boxed{\mathsf{Email}\,\mathsf{All}\,\mathsf{Search}\,\mathsf{History}\,\Big[\mathsf{Copy}\,\mathsf{Search}\,\,\mathsf{History}\,\mathsf{Link}\Big]\,\Big[\mathsf{Copy}\,\,\mathsf{Search}\,\,\mathsf{History}\,\,\mathsf{Details}\Big]}$

Exporting Your Search History and Selected Articles

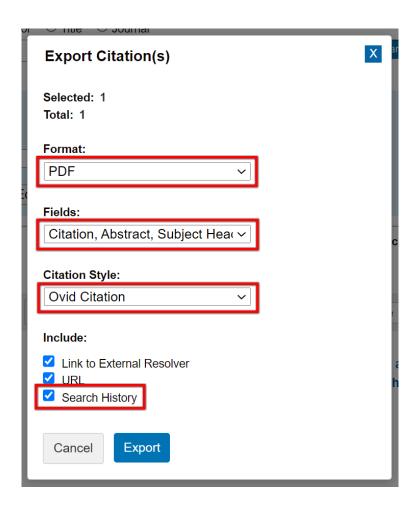
To export your search history along with information about any relevant articles, select the relevant article(s) from the search results and then click on the "Export" button above the list of results.



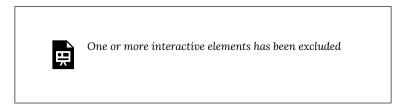
In the menu that appears, choose these options:

- Change the Format to either Microsoft Word or PDF
- Change the Fields to Citation, Abstract, Subject Headings (unless otherwise specified for an assignment)
- Leave the Citation Style as Ovid Citation (this will ensure the abstracts and Subject Headings of relevant articles are included)
- Make sure the **Search History** checkbox is selected

When you press the "Export" button, a file will be saved to your computer. The downloaded document should include the search history and abstracts for the article(s) you selected.



Video Demo: Saving Your Search History



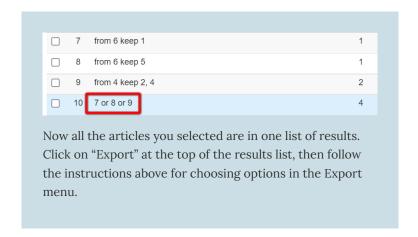
from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=41#oembed-1

Advanced: Exporting Articles from **Multiple Searches**

If you want to export articles from multiple PsycINFO searches, select each relevant article while you are searching by clicking on the checkbox beside its title and then clicking on "Keep Selected" above the list of results. This will add a line to your search history for that article. You can also select multiple articles at once.



Once you have selected and "Kept" all the articles you want to use, each one will appear as a separate line in your search history. To combine them, use the search box to write out the number of each search with OR in between them. For example, 7 or 8 or 9 will combine results from all three of those searches.



Next we will explore using APA style to cite your sources.

PART IV CITING YOUR SOURCES

Using APA Style

When you use someone else's words or ideas in your work, you need to cite them. In most Psychology courses, you will use APA style. An APA-style reference includes two components: an in-text citation and a reference list entry.

In-Text Citation

The in-text citation goes in your text where you quote or paraphrase an idea from another source. It includes the **author last name(s) and the year of publication** and, for a direct quotation, a page number. An in-text citation can be part of your sentence (narrative citation), or it can go in parentheses at the end of the relevant sentence or phrase (parenthetical citation).

Narrative citation example:

Bruce and Lamb (2019) found that ...

Parenthetical citation example:

A recent study showed that ... (Bruce & Lamb, 2019).

Reference List Entry

An APA-style reference answers four questions about an information source. Click on each one to learn more about it.



Ouestion 1

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A journal article reference uses this general structure to answer those questions:

> Author(s). (Year). Title of the article: Subtitle of the article. Journal Name, volume(issue), page-range or article number. https://doi.org/####

Check Your Understanding



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Question 2



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APA Guides and Tutorials

The U of A Library offers resources to help you cite your sources in APA style.

APA Citation Style QuickGuide (PDF)

• This PDF guide explains the elements of APA-style references and includes examples of many different types of sources.

APA Style Citation Tutorial

This online tutorial explores APA citation in-depth, including lots of practice questions.

The next page explains where you can ask for help with your research.

Congratulations, you've completed the tutorial!

My colleagues and I are here to help you with your research throughout your time at the U of A. If you have any questions about your research or about library services, you are very welcome to ask us using any of these options:

- Chat with a U of A Library staff member
- Email augustana.reference@ualberta.ca to reach Augustana Library staff
- Email me at kara.blizzard@ualberta.ca to ask questions or book a consultation

I would appreciate if you complete the short survey below (or access the survey on a separate page here) to help me learn what's working and how the modules can be improved.



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here: https://openeducationalberta.ca/auglibpsy/?p=6

Acknowledgement

This project is supported by the University of Alberta Library.

