LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDE

STEP 1: ANALYZE YOUR TOPIC

Whether you are assigned a topic or free to choose one on your own, spend some time thinking about your topic from multiple perspectives.

Keep in mind that conducting research is about experimentation. You may have to vary your search terms and use multiple source types.

You may need to use more than one search tool. For example,

- Library Catalog
- Library databases (Academic Search Complete, SIRS Issues Researcher, etc.)
- Google Scholar

You may need to find information in different types of sources. For example,

- Books
- Magazines
- Journals
- Newspapers

STEP 2: FRAME YOUR SEARCH AND DETERMINE KEYWORDS

Clarify what you are interested in finding out about your topic. Create a Research Question to frame your topic:

For example, "Is there a relationship between cell phone use and driving performance?"

Create a list of Related Terms or factors that may concern your topic, such as ...

- cell phone, driving, attention, distraction, listening, multitasking, task performance, task complexity, conversation

To limit and focus your search create a list of Narrower Terms, such as ...

- By population – men, women, teens, groups, etc.
- By geography – Los Angeles, California, United States, etc.
- By time period – 21st century, 1980s, 2017, etc.

To find additional results create a list of Broader Terms, such as ...

- telecommunication, cellular telephones, driving, cognition, traffic, accidents
STEP 3: CREATE YOUR SEARCH QUERY

Combine your search terms to create a query that you can use to search for sources on your topic.

Use the words **AND** or **OR** to combine multiple terms/keywords in a search. For example,

- cell phone use AND driving (AND narrows the search)
- cell phone OR mobile phone (OR broadens the search)

You can put quotation marks around words to search as a phrase: “cell phone”

STEP 4: FIND BOOKS

Use the **Library Catalog** on the Library Website ([http://library.rcc.edu](http://library.rcc.edu)) to locate physical and electronic books including textbooks and other course materials.

Search by **AUTHOR**, **TITLE**, **KEYWORD**, or Library of Congress **SUBJECT** headings to find specific titles.

When searching on a topic, begin with a **KEYWORD** search like: cell phones AND driving

Once you find a book relevant to your topic look at the **SUBJECT** headings assigned to that book to find similar materials.

STEP 5: FIND ARTICLES

Use the **Databases A-Z** link on the Library Website ([http://library.rcc.edu](http://library.rcc.edu)) to locate electronic articles from magazines, journals, newspapers, and reference sources.

Read through the titles and descriptions of the databases and select one based on your topic and the kind of source you are looking for.

Some recommended general subject databases to get started with are:

- Academic Search Complete
- SIRS Issues Researcher
- CQ Researcher
- America’s News
- Gale Virtual Reference Library