

Learning Objectives

After completing this module, you should be able to:

1. Identify key concepts in a research topic statement
2. Generate a list of synonyms or related terms to use in database searching

Before you begin your research, write out one or more sentences, phrases, or questions that define your topic. Underline or highlight the main words or concepts:

- What is the extent of **alcohol abuse** among **undergraduate students**?

Once you've identified these terms, write down any related terms or synonyms you can think of. You should also identify words that have broader or narrower meanings than your initial term:

- Broader term = university students
- Original term = undergraduate students
- Narrower term = freshmen

Here is an example of brainstorming, which helps you identify possible search terms before you begin your research:

Topic: Gender differences in attitudes about romantic relationships

Concepts: Gender differences attitudes romantic relationships

Related terms:

Gender differences	Attitudes	Romantic relationships
Sex differences	Perceptions	Interpersonal relationships
Men/women	Beliefs	Romance
Males/females	Impressions	Dating
	Opinions	

Now it's your turn. On the next page, we'll give you a sample topic so you can practice identifying key concepts as well as synonyms and related terms. For each of these steps, type the terms in the text box and click "Process It!" Then you'll be able to compare your list to the ones we made.

Studies of Internet users have concluded that spending too much time online can adversely affect a person's psychological well-being, sometimes leading to depression and loneliness.

In the box, list all the main terms or concepts in this topic:

Process It!

The next step is to consider alternate words or synonyms for one of the main ideas. **List related terms or synonyms for "Internet".**

Process It!

As the last step in brainstorming, think of alternate words for the other main idea. **List all the terms you can think of that describe the psychological and health effects related to your paper topic.**

Process It!