**As you work through these exercises, please ask a librarian if you have any questions!**

Narrow the focus of a broad topic by making it more specific.

If you have a topic that you’re interested in, write it down below.

Need a Topic? Go to http://libraryguides.ccbcmd.edu/issues and look at the Topic Ideas tab to find one!

**Your Topic:**

**Brainstorm**

Often, it helps to narrow your topic (make it more specific and focused) before you start doing research. Complete the following exercise to turn your topic into a research question—use the Who, What, Where, When, Why questions that a news reporter would ask. You may also want to think about ideas such as cause and effect and value (i.e. good, right, just and appropriate).

Fill in the “sections” in the chart with words about your topic.

![Chart with sections for When/Time, Where/Place, What/Event, and Who/Person]
Now use your “section” answers to form a **Research Question**.

(Remember, a research question can inform, interpret or argue.)

**Identify the main ideas in your research question/statement by picking out key terms.** Then, compile a list of search terms for your topic (keywords), including synonyms and related terms.

Circle three main ideas in your research question and brainstorm synonyms or other keywords that would narrow or broaden your topic.

**Example:**
Are *children* who play *video games* more likely to be *violent*?

**Key ideas**

- children  
- video games  
- violent

**Synonyms**

- child  
- youth  
- kids  
- computer games  
- gaming  
- electronic games  
- violence  
- aggressive  
- antisocial

Now try it with your research question. Circle the key ideas in your statement.

**Your Research Question:**

**Idea 1:**

**Key ideas**

**Synonyms**

**Idea 2:**

**Key ideas**

**Synonyms**

**Idea 3:**

**Key ideas**

**Synonyms**
**Boolean Searching** is a type of computer logic that uses the words “AND”, “OR”, “NOT” to focus/narrow your search results.

To search for items combine your key ideas or synonyms with the word “AND”.
   - For example: children AND video games AND violence

**TRAAP your sources**

Use the best! – To evaluate the material you find, answer these questions:
   - **Time** - when was it written? Has it been updated?
   - **Relevance** - does it relate to your topic or answer your question?
   - **Authority** – who is the author(s)? Are they qualified to write about the topic? How do you know?
   - **Accurate** – is the information trustworthy? Is it supported by evidence? Has it been tested for accuracy?
   - **Purpose** – why was it written, to inform, sell, persuade? Is there a bias or is the material objective?

**Finding a book in the CCBC Library**

Go to http://libraryguides/ccbc.cmd.edu/issues. Choose the “Books” tab. Use the Library Catalog search box to find the best book on your topic that can be checked out from the library. Do this by typing in some of the keywords from the previous exercise. For example: children AND video games AND violence. Then TRAAP the results.

In the space provided, write down the book information from the catalog.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Call Number</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which Campus?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Citing a Book**

When you use material for your research project you need to cite it to give credit to the original author. You will need the following information to cite a book.
Write down the following information for the book you chose:

| **Author(s) or Editor** |          |
Do you need to change your research topic? Did you find more keywords? Feel free to go back and update your answers. (The research process is a great big circle!)

**Finding an article in a CCBC Library database**

Go to http://libraryguides/ccbccmd.edu/issues. Choose the “Articles” tab. Look in the “Databases” box and choose the SIRS database. Search SIRS to find the best article on your topic. Use some of the same keywords (for example: children AND video games AND violence) to search. Then TRAAP the results.

In the space provided, write down the article information from the SIRS database article that you chose.

**Article:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Source (Publication Name)</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Database**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium (print or web)</th>
<th>Date accessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decipher an MLA citation.

Fill in the chart using the citation below.

On any Library Guide look at the “Citation Help” tab for more information about MLA style and how to cite your sources.

Spring 2012
CCBC Libraries