PSY 510 Step-by-Step Guide to Using the Shapiro Library
Conducting Basic Psychological Research

This document was prepared by Susan Staggs, PhD.

**Note:** Review the following resources before using this guide:

- **Getting Started With Research at Shapiro Library**
  Throughout the program, you will draw from scholarly sources, particularly peer-reviewed journal articles. This resource will help guide you through the SNHU library. It will also provide helpful tools for researching a variety of sources.

- **Video:** Shapiro Library Orientation (3:38)
  This video is a tutorial on finding databases in the Shapiro Library.

- **Psychology Resource Guide for Undergraduate and Graduate Students**
  Throughout this course and degree program, you will need to conduct research in your area of interest. This webpage provides links to a variety of psychology resources offered through the Shapiro Library.

**Note:** This guide presents one method out of a number of suitable methods for doing very basic research on psychological topics. Depending on your experience using the resources at the Shapiro Library, you may wish to use a more sophisticated method, but this is a great method for beginning researchers. It teaches you to get a review article and use that one review article as the source for all of your other articles. **To avoid getting overwhelmed and frustrated, beginning researchers need to read reviews of research to learn what is going on with their research topic before accessing empirical articles reporting results of a single study. So here is how you do that in 10 steps.** You can use this method for all research you do at the graduate level, although you are encouraged to get more sophisticated with your searches as you learn more about research databases and search engines.
1. Go to the Shapiro Library home page. Once on the page, select the **Find Articles, eBooks, & More** icon. When the drop-down menu appears, select the **A-Z Database List**.

2. **Do NOT use the Summons Multi-Search engine to do research for graduate courses.** It returns too many resources that are not suitable for graduate-level referencing. Instead, first search for peer-reviewed journal articles using the PsychINFO database. To get there, click **A-Z Database List**, then click **Psychology** from **All Subjects** drop-down list of choices. You will see this page:
3. Click **PsychINFO 1887-Current**. You will see this page:

4. Do not change anything in the Search Mode and Expanders area. In the Limit Your Results area, click **Linked Full Text**, **References Available**, and **Peer-Reviewed**. In the **Publication Year** start-date field, type **2007**. This way you will only get results from the past 10 years. Research that is more than 10 years old in psychology is out of date. Do not change anything else in the **Limit Your Results** area. Now, go back to the Search box at the top of the screen and type your first search term. **Be as specific as you can.** Search terms like “child and adolescent development” or “forensic psychology” are too broad. Assume that you want to research treatments for autism among children, and you are especially interested in improving communication in kids with autism. **The first type of article you need is a review article. These articles review other studies and provide summaries and syntheses of existing research.** Do NOT start looking at study articles until you have read at least one review article. Why? Because unless you are an expert on autism treatment, you need to learn more about the subject in general. Also, for many papers, starting from a recent review article and using that article’s references to find more articles is a smart strategy. So for your search terms, in the Search box, type “treatment AND autism AND children AND review.” This is a good strategy that will return only articles with the main topics you are interested in. AND is a Boolean phrase, so the search will look for articles that contain all of these words. If you were to just enter those terms without AND in between them, your search would return only articles with the phrase “treatment autism children review,” so that is not what you want. Using the search above, your screen should look like this:
5. Now, click the **Search** button. Next you must evaluate whether any of the returned articles are relevant to your research topic. You will see this screen:

**Search Results: 1 - 20 of 312**

   - *Kreslins, Ance; Robertson, Ashley E.; Melville, Craig; Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, Vol 9, Jun 20, 2015 ArtID: 22*
   - Publisher: Biltmore Central Limited; [Journal Article]
   - **Subjects:** Anxiety; Autism Spectrum Disorders; Intervention; Psychosocial Rehabilitation; Childhood (birth-12 yrs); Adolescence (13-17 yrs)
   - **Cited References:** (54)
   - [PDF Full Text](#)

   - **Subjects:** Eating Behavior; Intervention; Mealtime; Childhood (birth-12 yrs); Neonatal (birth-1 mo); Infancy (2-23 mo); Preschool Age (2-5 yrs); School Age (6-12 yrs); Male; Female
   - [Show all 19 images](#)
   - **Cited References:** (56)
   - [PDF Full Text](#)

6. First, note that the search only returned 312 articles, not the usual 2,000 that get returned when you do not limit your search. That is still a lot, but let’s take a peek at the first few articles to see if they are relevant review articles that discuss treatments for autism in children. The first two are too specific because the first one discusses anxiety in kids with autism and the second one discusses feeding difficulties, and we are really interested in improving communication. The third one looks like a technical methodology article, so let’s scroll down:

7. The fourth article looks like it is for adults with autism because it talks about work, and kids do not work, so skip that one. The fifth is specific to school nurses, and the sixth looks like it is a methodology article because it talks about the properties of measurement tools. It might be time to narrow our search a bit more. We are interested in autism in children, and our search term included the word children, but we can further limit our search any time during the search process. In the Current Search column, under Subject: Major Headings, click Age and click the Preschool Age checkbox because we are really only interested in working with preschool-aged children. You will see the following revised search results:
8. Wow! That helped a lot. Now there are only 31 articles we need to look through. The fourth article in this search looks fantastic. It meets all our criteria: It is a review article of interventions to teach communication skills to autistic children.

9. Click PDF full text for the fourth article. Download and read the article. The References section will contain references for many individual studies of communication skills in autism. If you need more references, or if you need an empirical article for your assignment rather than a review article, choose one of the references that looks relevant and follow Steps 1 through 4 of this process, entering the article title in the Search box instead of “treatment AND autism AND children AND review.”

10. Continue to perform Step 9 until you get all the articles you need. If you use this method and do not find a good article, go back to Step 4 and enter different search terms.