

BARNARD LIBRARY
Library Research Skills Worksheet
<http://www.barnard.edu/library/courses/LibraryExercise.pdf>

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructor: _____

This worksheet will help you to start investigating your research paper topic, and improve your research skills. If you have any difficulty, remember that the reference librarians are available to assist you in your search, and can be reached at 212-854-3953, or by e-mail at redesk@barnard.edu.

1. CHOOSING A TOPIC

You should choose a topic that is interesting to you. Keep in mind, however:

§ your topic should not be too **broad** (e.g. *The role of women in the plays of Shakespeare* - hundreds of books and articles have been written on this topic)

§ your topic should not be too **narrow** (e.g. *The symbolism of Ariel's costume in the Tempest* - you will probably not be able to find enough articles or books discussing this)

§ a good rule of thumb to remember is this: if there are entire books written about your topic, it is too broad for a research paper; on the other hand, if your thesis can be fully discussed in a few paragraphs, your topic is too narrow.

Choose a topic and write it here: _____

2. DECIDING ON SEARCH TERMS

§ Write down as many terms as you can that are connected with your topic - these are your **search terms**

§ Use brainstorming techniques to come up with **synonyms** and **alternative spellings**, if any

§ e.g. search terms for the topic *The theme of the underworld in Virgil's Aeneid* might be: **underworld, hades, hell, aeneid, aeneas, virgil, vergil**

Write the search terms for your topic here: _____
