

# Research Papers 101

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# Choose a Topic

- Topic of Interest
- *When (Time), Where (Place), Who (Person or Group), What (Event or Aspect)*
- *More specific topic = ease of research*
- *Focused, Eliminate off-topic sources*
- *Two (or more) elements*
- *Topic Statement = Topic + Specific Assertion*
- *Not a Yes/No question*

# Example

Topic: Acupuncture

- When (Time): 2000-2008
- Where (Place):
- Who (Person or Group): elderly
- What (Event or Aspect): effectiveness

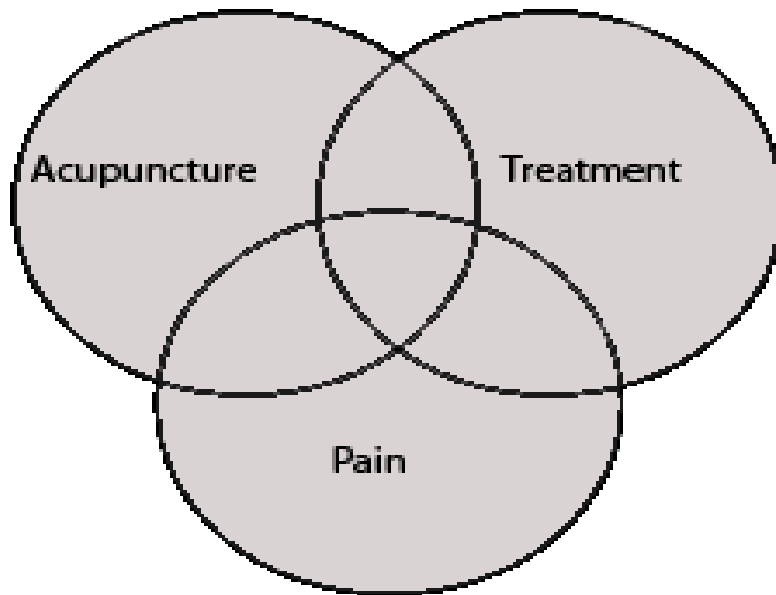
Research Question/Statement (Thesis):

Acupuncture is an effective form of alternative medicine.

# Search Strategies

- Key Words from research topic/question
- Synonyms
- Variations in spelling
- Quotes for phrases e.g. “acupuncture points”
- Articles are Ignored (a, an, the, of)
- Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT)

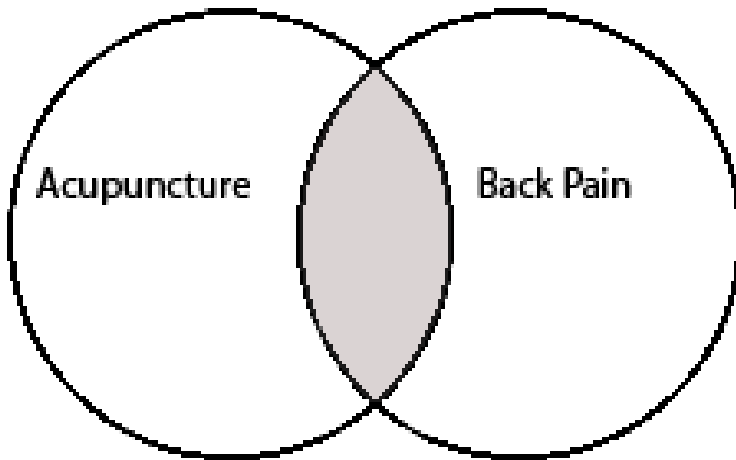
# OR: acupuncture OR treatment OR pain



the OR operator

- This search instructs the computer to give you all the articles that include the word **acupuncture** or
- all the articles that include the word **treatment** or
- all the articles that include the word **pain** or
- all the articles that include any one term, or both, or all three.

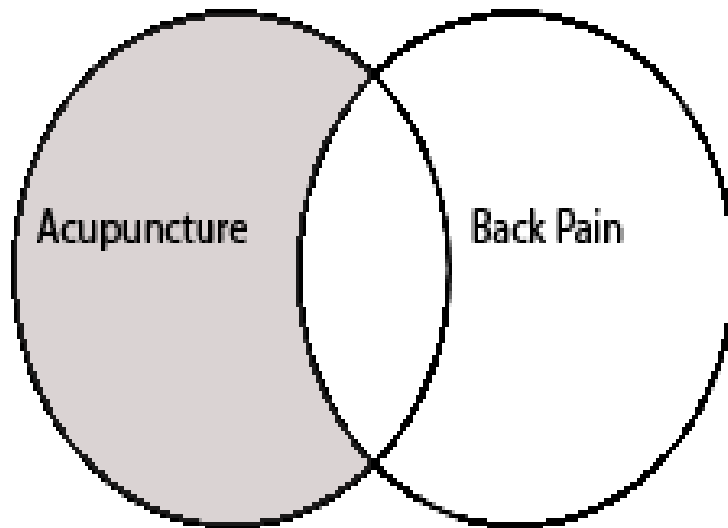
# AND: acupuncture AND “back pain”



the AND operator

- This search instructs the computer to give you all the articles that include the words **acupuncture** and **“back pain”**.
- The grey section represents the intersection of the two terms. All search results come from that intersection.
- Articles that include the word acupuncture without the phrase “back pain”, and vice versa, will not be included.
- In Google (it is default) use plus sign ( + ) if needed.

# NOT: acupuncture NOT “back pain”



the NOT operator

- This search instructs the computer to give you all the articles that include the word **acupuncture** that do not include the word “**back pain**”.
- The grey section represents the records that would be returned by the search.
- Articles that include the word acupuncture that also include the phrase “back pain” would not be included.
- In Google use minus sign ( - ).

# There are two major ways to discuss texts in your essay:

- **Direct quotes** (the author's exact words)
- **Indirect quotes** (summary or paraphrase of the author's ideas)

# Direct quotes require

- A **signal phrase** or **identifying phrase** (tells who and what you're quoting)
- **Quotation marks** around the quote
- A **citation** to show where the quote came from
- Using the author's **exact words**

## Example of a direct quote

Donellan and Shanley write, “We therefore suggest that the positive changes in some participants following acupuncture reported in this study may be clinically important and warrant further investigation” (203).

# Summaries require

- An **identifying phrase** (tells who and what you're summarizing)
- A quick description of the **main points**
- Use of only **your own words** and phrasing

# Example of a summary

In their article on the effects of acupuncture on multiple sclerosis, Clare P. Donnellan and Jackey Shanley describe an experiment in which patients were given two different types of acupuncture, “minimal acupuncture” and “Chinese medical acupuncture.” Minimal acupuncture was simply a placebo, needles stuck into the skin at non-acupressure points. Chinese medical acupuncture was the traditional, “correct” form of acupuncture. Surprisingly, the group with the placebo acupuncture actually had more improvement than the group with the correct acupuncture. The authors note that this could be because of the very small sample size of only fourteen people. Their only significant conclusion was that the real acupuncture was probably safe for those with multiple sclerosis, since no negative side effects occurred.

# Paraphrases require

- A **identifying phrase** (tells who and what you're paraphrasing)
- The **same ideas** as in the original texts
- **Your own** words and phrasing

# Example of a paraphrase

Original text:

“The other group received minimal acupuncture, involving the insertion of acupuncture needles just through the skin and away from true acupuncture sites.”

Paraphrase:

Donnellan and Shanley explain that the second set of patients did not receive “real,” acupuncture, but rather a placebo treatment with the needles stuck in arbitrary parts of the body.

# Developing an argument

- Choose a **question at issue**

For example:

Issue: acupuncture

Questions at issue:

Should acupuncture be covered by medical insurance?

Have studies proven that acupuncture is effective?

What conditions are best treated by acupuncture, according to medical studies?

Are American acupuncturists as competent as Chinese ones?

Does a person need to speak Chinese in order to be a good acupuncturist?

Should acupuncture be offered as a supplemental treatment in Western hospitals, or only in specialized acupuncture clinics?

# Your **thesis** is the answer to your **question at issue**:

- Because of its proven medical benefits, acupuncture should be covered by medical insurance, but only for certain conditions that have been shown to respond well to this treatment.
- While medical studies have been inconclusive, this does not invalidate the effectiveness of acupuncture because it is a preventative, not a curative, therapy.
- Medical studies have been inconclusive about the effectiveness of acupuncture for treating physical ailments, but they have clearly shown its benefit for psychological illnesses, especially depression.
- American-trained acupuncturists can learn to be as competent as Chinese-trained ones, but they must learn the Chinese language in order to fully understand the key principles of acupuncture.

## Paragraph **describing** an argument

Stephen Barrett argues that the certification process for acupuncturists is not credible because it does not provide training in any proven medical technique. Furthermore, he suggests that the certification misleads acupuncture patients into believing that they are receiving treatment from a qualified practitioner. He quotes George Ulett, who writes about how even the medical establishment has been deceived by the false medical claims of acupuncture: “Unfortunately, a few HMOs, hospitals, and even medical schools are succumbing to the bait and exposing patients to such bogus treatments when they need real medical care” (Barrett). Barrett implies that it is the responsibility of hospitals, medical schools, and insurance companies to only endorse proven medical practices. Patients trust their doctors, and if the doctors are validating an alternative practice such as acupuncture, the patients will believe that it is a legitimate form of medicine.

## Paragraph **taking a position**

Stephen Barrett does not believe that acupuncture should be practiced in hospitals, since he sees it as a sham. He quotes George Ulett, who argues that such “bogus” types of medicine do not belong in an established medical setting such as a hospital: “Unfortunately, a few HMOs, hospitals, and even medical schools are succumbing to the bait and exposing patients to such bogus treatments when they need real medical care” (Barrett). Ulett’s words suggest that the patients are being harmed by adding alternative treatments to their medical care. However, as Barrett himself argues, the main problem with alternative treatments is that patients might seek them out *instead of* western medicine. While no studies have definitively proven the effectiveness of acupuncture, neither have any studies shown acupuncture to be harmful. Therefore, it makes the most sense that if patients desire these treatments, that they should be administered in a hospital so that the patient will also receive the western medical treatments necessary for his or her condition, alongside the alternative treatments.

# Introductions should include:

- Some **background** on your topic
- A **summary** of what you will discuss or argue in the paper
- Nothing that doesn't relate to the body of the paper
- A **thesis statement** that explains your main point or argument.

## **Don't** give unrelated background in intros:

Acupuncture has been used since the stone age, when stones were used instead of needles. It is a Chinese healing technique but has also been used in Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. It was brought to the U.S. by Chinese railroad workers. Acupuncture works by sticking thin needles into “meridians,” or channels of energy in the body. There are twelve main meridians, although there are also smaller meridians. Acupuncture is an effective medical technique that should be available in hospitals along with conventional Western medicine.

## **Do** give background relevant to your main point:

Acupuncture is a form of healing that has been used by Chinese doctors for thousands of years. This practice of inserting needles into key areas of the body in order to redirect energy and heal sickness has been used by Chinese Americans since Chinese people first immigrated to the United States. In the last fifty years, non-Chinese Americans have become increasingly interested in acupuncture as a form of healing. Acupuncture has now become a common form of treatment in America, so much so that it is offered as a complementary treatment in many hospitals and doctor's offices. However, some scientists believe that there is no scientific proof of acupuncture's effectiveness and that it should not be endorsed by the medical establishment. While they are correct that no studies have conclusively proven acupuncture's effectiveness, its benefits have been observed by many patients, and it rarely has harmful side effects. Acupuncture is an effective medical technique that should be available in hospitals along with conventional Western medicine.

# Conclusions should include

- A **summary** of your **most important** arguments or ideas in the paper
- Some **final thoughts** as to why your findings are important (e.g. should some action be taken? Should the reader change his/her views?)
- Not a point-by-point summary of every idea in the paper

# **Don't** review every single idea from the paper:

In conclusion, acupuncture is an ancient method of healing. It was created in China, then brought to the U.S. by Chinese immigrants. It is now becoming a popular form of treatment in Western hospitals. Many doctors and scientists oppose the use of acupuncture because it does not have strong scientific evidence supporting it. Stephen Barrett argues that hospitals and insurance companies should not support acupuncture. But other studies have shown that over time, acupuncture has good results, as well as fewer side effects than conventional Western treatments. Everyone should be more open-minded and accept new ideas such as acupuncture.

## **Do** review the most important ideas from a big-picture perspective:

In conclusion, while acupuncture has been seen as suspect by some scientists, its benefits potential benefits seem to far outweigh its risks. It is an extremely safe form of therapy, and many patients find it helpful despite the difficulty of proving its effects in a scientific study. As long as patients are also being treated by a qualified doctor, there seems to be little downside to incorporating a traditional, time-tested technique such as acupuncture, even if we don't have a good scientific explanation for it. Hopefully the medical establishment will continue the current trend of incorporating traditional therapies, since this can only lead to more options and greater flexibility for patients.