

Dear Ducky (researcher),

It's your ever-caring research supervisor here again. I was listening to you explaining your research project to Mrs Jones today and I thought that you were very polite and helpful in talking to her. It's always good to be polite, especially to those who can give you information that will help your research. But I noted that you talked about all of the reading you have needed to do and you didn't seem to be very clear about the reasons for this. To try to help you, I've put some questions and diagrams together which might help you to gather and focus your thoughts about what you need to do when you think about literature.

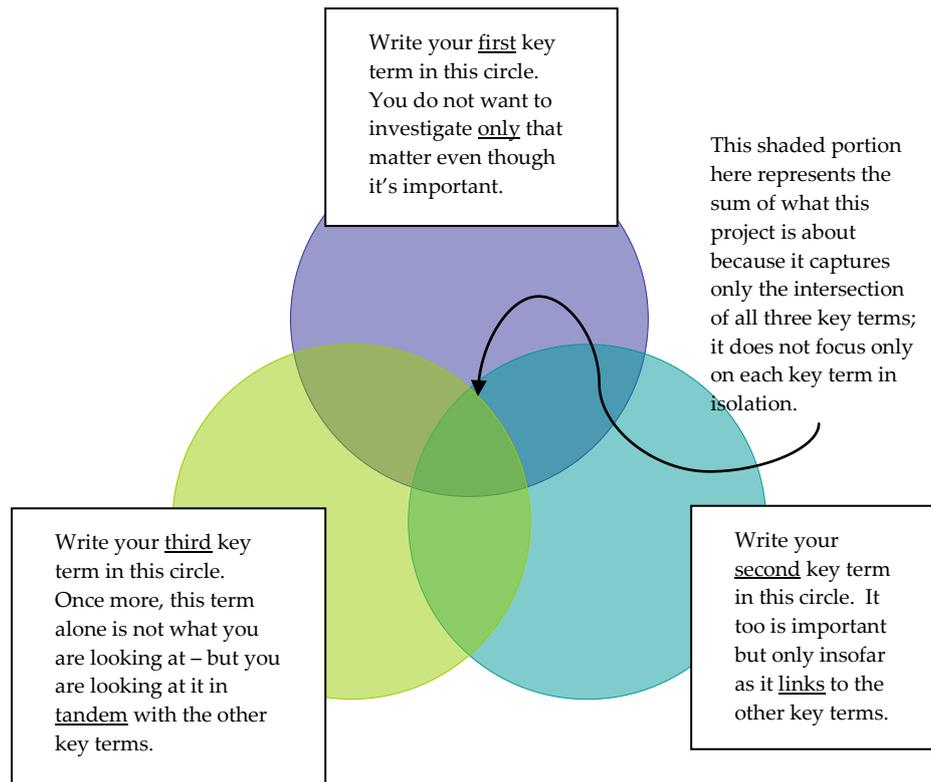
In the beginning there was the challenge of sorting out what you're on about.	
<p>Why do you have to read lots of things about your research? Have other people done this research before or investigated stuff that is similar? What are the key words or terms that best describe your project? How will you use the Venn Diagram (see below) to show the essence of your project?</p>	
<p>What is the first thing you need to do? What are some of your options for accessing literature? Other than Fishpond, Google, and Wikipedia, what other options are there for beginning to find out? What will you ask the library to do to help you? What key words will you give to the librarian?</p> <p>'Key words' you say? 'What are they and why do we have them?'</p> <p>Key words are the small cluster of one word clues that lead you to the essence of your project and guide your literature search. They are often, but not always, best shown in a Venn diagram.</p>	

“What on earth is a Venn diagram?” I can hear you asking!

Well, at a most basic level, a Venn diagram is a way of showing how individual parts of an idea fit together to make up the whole idea and the part where those bits join together is called the *intersection* of those ideas. What that does is reduce your need to look at separate piles of masses of information, so that, instead, you look only at the portion which is the intersection. This helps by making things much more focused.

Instead of looking at three separate piles of information, the intersection shows that what you are looking at is made up of only where *Part One AND Part Two AND Part Three* meet.

But within *Part One*, there can be some terms which more or less be the same, e.g. *Family OR Whānau OR Iaga OR ‘relos’*. (So the secret is to put them down inside the circle which shows that idea.) But you can also show that something is NOT part of the Venn diagram, for instance, *infant NOT baby*. (Can you see how that excludes *babies* from what you are thinking about?)



Now that you've listed the three key words which show that your project is about (the intersection between) *Part One AND Part Two AND Part Three*, you should add words which show the OR options. Get it? That means that you add words which are synonyms, or which are a part of the same family of terms.

Finally, when you've done that, you should note the words which show what your project is NOT about, that is, members of a family of terms which you do not want to consider or include in your investigation.

So this means that Ducky's project is about *play* (OR *free activities* OR *children's work* but NOT *indoors*) AND *parents* (OR *caregivers* OR *minders* but NOT *older siblings*) AND *equipment* (OR *gear* OR *play-stuff* but NOT *computer games*).

'But'. I can also hear you thinking, 'how on earth can a diagram like this assist me with generating a literature review?' The answer is surprisingly simple: your literature review is actually almost always going to be a mirror of your research project. Thus, if you can first work out what your project is about (and what it's NOT about) you will have worked out at the same time what your literature review should focus on. And then it's simply a matter of organising your material and being critical in your thinking and writing about it. Easy peasy? Read on Ducky!

So, Ducky, how are you now going to organise your materials?	
<p>Assuming you now have some materials, how are you going to organise them? What will you do first, second, then third, and so on? (<i>Hint: think little steps and easy ones at that, for instance, you may choose to say, 'I'm going to keep this material [because...]</i> and <i>I'm going to reject/return/delete/ these items [because...].'</i>)</p> <p>And even before you select/reject materials, how will you decide what to reject/accept? How will you know what is useful and what is not?</p> <p>Have you, when you have accepted and/or rejected these materials, got an adequate number of resources about the intersections of your key words to begin your reading?</p> <p>How will you approach your reading and examination of each item? What are you going to look for when you read a particular item of writing? How will you decide how it is relevant to what you want to find out?</p> <p>How will you process each item which you are examining; will you simply remember everything; will you make notes, take dictation, or what? What will you do if you find yourself disagreeing with what you have read? And, what if you can see exciting prospects for blending or merging ideas from one source with those from another text, or webpage, or whatever?</p>	
Then what?	
<p>What are you going to choose to read next? Why have you chosen this one? What is it about? What were the repeated patterns, comments, ideas, etc.?</p> <p>How should you report these repeatable regularities? How have checked out their usefulness and relevance to the project you are doing?</p> <p>Finally, read back through the notes you've made in the next column and see if you can work out what you've achieved and what you have still got left to achieve. That kind of stock-take is nearly always very useful.</p>	

I hope, Ducky, that these notes have been useful for you. I want you to keep up the good work you have begun to do and be sure to go through these notes more than once so that you learn as much as possible from them. I can promise you that I will know how well you have done this when I come to assessing your final report.

Best wishes,

Thinking_Al_Lowed. (Your ever careful supervisors, AKA Dr Jens J. Hansen, Melanie Wong & Jo Perry .)

P.S. Just for your interest, I've included a form that you might find useful for organising your readings. Have a look at it and ask me about it if you need to.

MANAGING LITERATURE (BY MAKING SELECTED HELPFUL NOTES ABOUT RELEVANT REFERENCES)

Relevant reference	Major Points of relevance to this project	Details of relevance (HANDY HINT – REMEMBER TO NOTE PAGE NUMBERS SO THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEARCH FOR THE POINTS YOU'VE MADE)			
		Theme outlined by the author/s	Methods used by the author/s	Key findings they noted	Issues identified by them and/or you

...and so on

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