

# **ToP-DB<sup>©</sup>**

## V2.5

### *A Teaching of Psychology Database*

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## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the *TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY Database (ToP-DB* Version 2.5). I developed this database to provide a tool for **conveniently** locating articles in *Teaching of Psychology (ToP)*. This version contains files in dBASE format. Many database/spreadsheet applications read from and write to dBASE files (e.g., Excel, QuattroPro). There is also a modified text version of this database called ToP-INDEX that can be used in most popular word processing software.

### Database Description

The original version of *ToP-DB* was described in a *ToP* article (Johnson, 1991). Changes were made in the database since the release of the original version. If you used the original version of *ToP-DB* you should read the section below that describes changes in the current version.

*ToP-DB* includes all articles published in the journal between the years of 1974 and 2001 with a few exceptions. The annotated bibliographies that traditionally accompany the December issue (e.g., Wise & Fulkerson, 1988), book reviews, and video reviews are not included.

### Database Structure

Table 1 lists the 11 fields that comprise the structure of this database. The field labeled SECTION differentiates the section of the journal in which an article appeared: Topical, Methods & Techniques, Computers, Special Issue, or Faculty Forum. Prior to 1985, the headings "general articles", "short articles", and "articles" were used in the journal. To minimize the number of descriptors, these articles were given the label "Topical." The TYPE field organizes the articles into a small number of meaningful categories. As a result, each article was classified as one of 11 types: activity, bibliography, comment, course (description), demonstration, empirical (research other than survey), equipment (description), software, survey, symposium or article. The latter is a catch-all for the articles that did not fit into any of the other categories. (see Appendix A for **specific** descriptors used in these fields)

The SPECIALTY and SUB\_SPEC (sub specialty) fields help the user to narrow the scope of the search. I chose a limit of two descriptors for each article to save file space; unfortunately, that limitation made the choice of accurate descriptors difficult. Identification of a general descriptor (e.g., abnormal, cognition, social) for the SPECIALTY field and a more specific descriptor (e.g., schizophrenia, mnemonics, aggression) for the SUB\_SPEC field solved the problem to some extent. This strategy worked well for most of the citations, although it was not without problems. One potential difficulty was that the "SPECIALTY" descriptors would be too narrow in scope, yielding an unwieldy number of descriptors in that field. Another possibility was that descriptors would be too general and not useful in narrowing searches. I attempted to strike a balance between these two alternatives, and considerable editing was necessary to accomplish this.

The FIRST\_AUTH and ET\_AL fields contain the authors' last names and initials for each article. The FIRST\_AUTH field contains the names of the first authors and the ET\_AL field contains the names of all other authors.

The DATE and TITLE fields list the complete title and the month and year of the issue in which the articles appeared, respectively. All issues are listed as being published on the first day of the month. The journal began publication with issues 1-4 listed as February, April, October, and December. So, the date 02/01/90 refers to the February issue in 1990, or issue #1 for 1990. In 1997, the journal changed from publication in a specific month to issue numbers. Until I can determine a new strategy for combining these two methods, I will continue to use month and year in each record. Therefore 02/01/97 refers to issue 1997(1), 04/02/97 refers to 1997(2), and so on.

The COMPUTER field is a logical-type field that I included to indicate whether an article involved the use of computers. Articles in which computers were used were assigned the value true; those that did not involve computers were assigned a value of false. (NOTE: Some software packages translate this to YES/NO or 1/0.)

The PAGE and VOLUME fields contain page numbers and volume numbers associated with each article.

## **Indexes**

Attached to this document you will find two indexes. The first contains the SUB\_SPECIalties indexed by SPECIALTY for all articles. The second index is similar to the first, with the restriction that it contains only keywords for those articles categorized as activities or demonstrations. The numbers associated with the descriptors indicate the number of times descriptors were used. I attempted to keep the total number of descriptors to a minimum, but with such a wide variety of topics covered in ToP, that task was difficult.

When I began compiling the database, I did not anticipate the large number of entries in some of these categories. Some of the SUB\_SPECIalties probably deserve to be classified as specialties. The limitation of two keywords/article made the selection of SUB\_SPECIalties particularly difficult. At times I found it difficult to identify a good descriptor in the SUB\_SPEC field, so I simply assigned the same keyword as is in the SPECIALTY field. I tried to keep that practice to minimum.

## **Changes in database since the original publication**

I deleted the SUMMARY field from this version of ToP-DB. Many previous users indicated that they did not use it, and the fact that dBASE stores this field in a separate file format became problematic for persons using the database in other applications. I added the VOLUME field and the page number field (PAGE).

The original version of the database contained no upper-case characters due to the case sensitive nature of dBASE. I decided to change that in this version. Author's names and initials in the

FIRST\_AUTH and ET\_AL fields have been capitalized and arranged in the form specified by the APA Publication Manual (4th ed.). Words in titles have also been capitalized appropriately.

**Disclaimer:** I am not a professional indexer, so I make no claims that the keywords assigned to each article are the best for the purposes of the general user. I hope that I categorized the articles in a reasonably logical fashion, but I realize that with the limit of two descriptors you could argue that a particular article belongs elsewhere. Suggestions for changes in the database are welcomed, but **will not** necessarily be implemented. Compilation of this database is a "labor of love": No Society for the Teaching of Psychology/Divisional Two funds were used for its development.

I hope that you find TOP-DB as useful as I do for locating relevant articles in *Teaching of Psychology*. I plan to continue updating the database at the end of each publication year.

Again, I welcome any comments you may have about the database, but keep in mind its basic focus: to provide **quick, convenient** access to ToP articles.

#### Reference

Johnson, D. E. (1991). A Teaching of Psychology Database: 1974-1990. Teaching of Psychology, 18, 49-50.

**INDEX for ALL ARTICLES in ToP-DB**

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Table 1

### Structure of Teaching of Psychology Database

Field	Field Name
1	SECTION
2	TYPE
3	SPECIALTY
4	SUB_SPEC
5	FIRST_AUTH
6	ET_AL
7	DATE
8	TITLE
9	COMPUTER
10	PAGE

## APPENDIX A

The following is a list of the actual descriptors used in the **SECTION** and the **TYPE** fields.

### **SECTION**

computers  
faculty forum  
generalist (the new generalist section, 1997)  
meth & tech (methods & techniques)  
special issue  
topical

### **TYPE**

activity  
article  
biblio (bibliography)  
comment  
course  
demo (demonstration)  
empirical  
equipment  
interview  
software  
survey  
symposium



