

# STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING NURSING RESEARCH

## Small Group Games for Teaching Nursing Research

*Cheryl Tatano Beck*

Faculty who teach nursing research are continually searching for new and creative methods to hold students' attention in their research courses and also to stimulate students' interest in nursing research itself. This article describes two such games that have been devised by the author for use in an undergraduate research course, a crossword puzzle of basic research terminology and a scavenger hunt of research items.

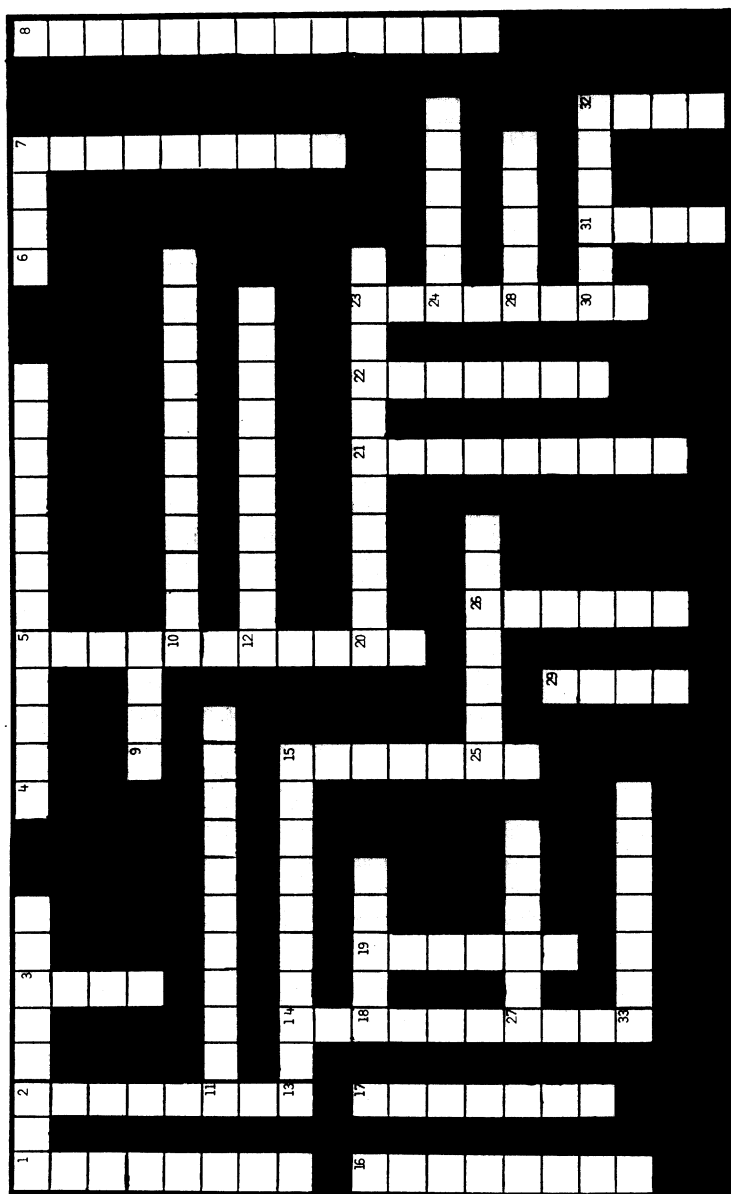
More and more undergraduate nursing research courses consist of a combination of generic nursing students and R.N. students. An additional benefit of either the crossword puzzle or the scavenger hunt is the fostering of relationships between these two groups of students. R.N. students bring rich backgrounds of clinical experience to a research course that the generic nursing students often lack. If an environment is provided in which R.N. and generic nursing students can interact together, the R.N. students may feel more comfortable about sharing examples of clinical problems they have encountered. This sharing and looking to research for answers may assist in dispelling a common belief held by generic nursing students that the research course will not be useful to them when they become professional registered nurses.

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**Department Editor's Note:** Dr. Beck's article recommends that nursing research educators utilize group games to enhance the student's motivation to learn research and reminds us that learning can be fun. The sharing of such innovations is valuable.

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### Down

- (1) degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure
- (2) systematic investigation using scientific methods to answer questions
- (3) systematic error introduced into sampling
- (5) repeating a research study under different conditions or with a different sample
- (7) threat to internal validity wherein there is a differential loss of subjects from different groups
- (8) research tool consisting of a series of questions that are to be completed by subjects in a study
- (14) entire number of persons or objects under study (a universe)
- (15) individual who participates in a research study
- (16) generalizability of the results of a study to other settings or samples
- (17) threat to internal validity wherein an event external to the treatment occurs concurrently with it
- (19) type of attitudinal scale that sums scores on a series of statements to which subjects indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement
- (21) an experimental intervention
- (22) level of measurement that rank orders a variable
- (23) a short, concise resume of an entire study
- (26) systematic critical evaluation of literature relating to research and theory on a topic
- (29) type of study that requires an in-depth investigation of one individual, group, or other unit
- (31) type of question that allows respondents to answer the question in their own words
- (32) bits of information obtained from a research study

### Across

- (1) a characteristic of an individual or thing that varies
- (4) the group of subjects who receive the treatment or intervention in a study
- (6) one question on a test or questionnaire
- (9) hypothesis that states no relationship exists between the variables
- (10) variable that influences the dependent variable
- (11) amount of consistency of an instrument's measurement
- (12) subject population that is available for a certain study
- (13) statement that predicts relationships between variables
- (18) small-scaled research study
- (20) definition of a variable that describes procedures necessary to measure it
- (24) subgroup of a population chosen to participate in a particular study
- (25) group of subjects who do not receive the experimental intervention or treatment in a study
- (27) total population an investigator is interested in studying and to whom the study results will be generalized
- (28) a number representing the difference between the lowest and highest values in a distribution of scores
- (30) questions that limit a subject's answers to certain choices
- (33) lowest level of measurement (categories)

Figure 1: Crossword puzzle of basic research terms.

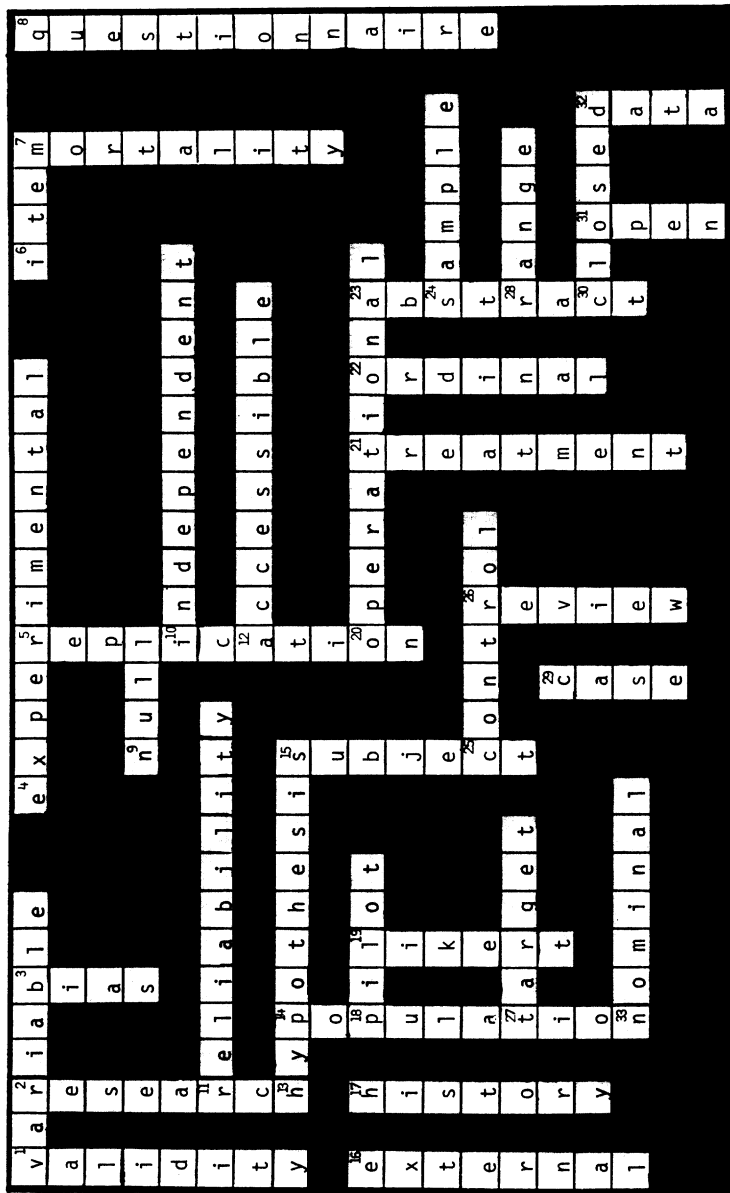


Figure 2: Solution of crossword puzzle on basic research terms.

The crossword puzzle (Figures 1 and 2) can be used effectively in one of the beginning classes in a research course when basic research terminology is being taught. The instructor divides the students into small groups, making certain that if R.N. students are enrolled in the course, each small group has both generic and R.N. students in it. One half hour is allotted for the students to complete the crossword puzzle, with the aid of their textbooks. If the textbook has a glossary, directing the students' attention to it may be particularly helpful. An element of competition may be introduced by announcing that the group who finishes the crossword puzzle first, with the correct answers, will receive prizes.

Besides the previously mentioned advantages of stimulating students' interest in nursing research and providing an opportunity for R.N. and generic students to interact, the scavenger hunt has one additional benefit—that of acquainting the undergraduate students with nursing faculty in their school who are actively engaged in research. Because undergraduate students may not have frequent opportunities to meet and talk with graduate nursing faculty, the scavenger hunt was designed to provide one such opportunity. The following list of 10 research-related items is suggested as a feasible scavenger hunt for undergraduate students:

- (1) an abstract
- (2) a computerized literature search print out
- (3) a computer print out of data analysis
- (4) a data collection form
- (5) an informed consent sheet
- (6) a poster from a poster presentation
- (7) a questionnaire or interview schedule
- (8) a research article
- (9) a research proposal
- (10) an interview with a nursing faculty member regarding his or her current research and also any humorous experiences that have occurred while conducting research

All of the above 10 items are to be obtained from research that undergraduate or graduate faculty in the students' school of nursing have conducted. One anticipated outcome is that some of the faculty member's enthusiasm and excitement for his or her research will be transferred to the undergraduate students who are having their first exposure to nursing research.

The following are some suggested guidelines for conducting the scavenger hunt. Divide the class into small groups. Just as with the crossword puzzle, if there are R.N. students enrolled in the course, make certain to assign both R.N. and generic nursing students to each group. Allow the students one week to gather the scavenger hunt items. Each group of students can decide among

themselves their strategy for obtaining the required items. In order not to overwhelm the faculty being interviewed, establish ground rules that a faculty member may be interviewed only once. If one group approaches a faculty member who has already been interviewed, that group will then need to seek out another faculty member. This ground rule will also assist in increasing the probability that faculty from all nursing specialties will be interviewed. Some class time should be reserved for each group to share the items they have obtained. The students' discussion of their interviews with nursing faculty regarding their research should be a particularly valuable learning experience.

In summary, two games that nursing students are familiar with, a crossword puzzle and a scavenger hunt, have been adapted for use in an undergraduate research course. Faculty can easily revise the list of items on the scavenger hunt to fit their particular school. For example, if a school of nursing does not have many faculty currently engaged in research, an item such as a nursing research journal might be substituted for the faculty interview. The games provide opportunity for students not only to learn to value research but also to experience that learning can be fun.