How Do I Search for Articles Using a Research Database?

Use a keyword search to start searching for information on your topic. A keyword search can be a broad type of search, which we recommend to begin searching.

The Strategy

The following strategy will help you find articles in any database:

- Identify 2-3 keywords that describe your research topic.
- Use the word AND to combine your words in a search.

**Example:**

money and politics and campaigns

- If your search results list is too small, then remove a word from your search.

**Example:**

money and politics

- If your search results list is too large, then add a word to your search.

**Example:**

money and politics and campaign and reform

An easy way to start searching in any database is to type in just the top search box.
When to Use AND:

Use the word **AND** in your search to combine the key elements, or keywords, in your topic in order to find only records that contain all of the words.

This is often the easiest and the best type of keyword search to use, because it is thorough yet focused: using **AND** ensures that all of the words you enter will be included in every record.

**Example:**

*Your topic = violence in schools*

*The search you type in = schools and violence*

You would simply type **schools and violence** in the search box. The catalog would find every record that has both the word *schools* and the word *violence*.

**When to Use a Phrase with Quotation Marks:**

If you want to search for an EXACT PHRASE, such as **civil rights**, simply type the phrase and place quotation marks around it.

**Example: **"civil rights"

Instead of using the word **AND** between the word *civil* and the word *rights*, by typing the phrase with quotation marks around the words, you will find only records with that exact phrase—with the words right next to each other and in that exact order.
When to Use OR:

Use the word **OR** between words to search for ANY SINGLE WORD you type in.

**Example:**

![Diagram showing 'business OR management']

Using the word **OR** is useful when you are looking for a VERY BROAD topic and are looking for items that have AT LEAST ONE of the words you type in. If you type in the keyword search **business or management**, you will find records with EITHER **business** OR **management**.

Try using **OR** with synonyms or related words so that if a record might not have one word, if it has the other, you will still pull up that record, for example:

- business OR management
- ethics OR morals
- children OR adolescents

**When to Use Truncation:**

Use an asterisk (*) to search for various endings of a word. This is called **truncation**.

**Examples:**

- **pollut*** - will find pollute, polluted, polluting, pollution
- **medic*** - will find medic, medics; will also find medical, medically, medicine, medicinal

Using truncation is useful to find as many records as you can on your topic, because it will search for all of the variations of the word you type in.

**Tip:** Once you master these types of keyword searches—when and how to use which one—you will be well on your way to finding everything you need! You can even combine the types of searches above—ask a librarian for more search tips the next time you have to write a paper!

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**Need help?**

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