Search Tips for Library Resources

How to Choose the Right Database

1. If you are unsure of which databases to use or you want to search multiple databases at the same time, start with Ebsco Discovery Service, which covers multiple topics and finds information from books, electronic books, streaming video, journal articles and more.

2. If your topic is a health issue, select the subject group Health/Medical Databases in Ebsco OR select another medical database, such as Ovid Nursing OR Gale/Infotrac Health Reference Center Academic.

3. If your topic addresses a social issue, use Gale/Infotrac Opposing Viewpoints, Facts.com Issues and Controversies, OR SIRS

4. Use a newspaper database such as Newsbank Access World News to find statistics or the most current updates or local (Wisconsin or Milwaukee) information.

Using the Right Search Terms

1. What words describe my topic? eating disorders in children

2. Can my topic be divided into smaller topics? Topic 1 – children
   Topic 2 – eating disorders

3. What other words describe my topic?
   
   Topic 1 – children or youth or boys or girls or preteens or youngsters
   Topic 2 – anorexia or binging or bulimia or compulsive eating or purging

4. What do I type in the search box? Sample searches:
   
   child* AND anorexia    boys AND “eating disorder”    girls AND bulimia
Limiting & Expanding Searches

Use **quotation marks** if you want to search an exact phrase.

```
“college loans”   “financial aid” and loans   “wireless networks”
```

When searching for 2 or more topics, use the word **AND** to join the terms together.

```
Facebook AND privacy   ipad AND features   violence AND television
```

**Truncate** words to search for all forms of the word. Most commonly used truncation symbols are:  ? OR *

```
comput* will retrieve items with the words: compute, computer, computers, computing, and computation.
```

If your search results are too large, use more specific terms for your topic.

Instead of **sports**, use **basketball**

If your search results are too small, use more general terms for your topic.

Instead of **Porsche**, use “**sports cars**”

Use **descriptive** search terms such as:

```
“herbal medicine”   “body language”   “nonverbal communication”
design AND jewelry   tattooing   “identity theft” AND prevention
```

**Do NOT** put terms such as: **with** as **into more** in the search box. These words have no meaning of their own and can be found in every information source. Nouns make the best search terms.

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**Boolean Operators**

**OR**
Retrieves all items with the word **dogs** plus all items with the word **cats**

```
dogs OR cats
```

**AND**
Retrieves only items that have both words (dogs and cats)

```
dogs AND cats
```

**NOT**
Retrieves all items with the word **dogs**, but without the word **cats**

```
dogs NOT cats
```