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 On File/Infobase Learning Issues and Controversies*, OR *SIRS*.

4. Use a newspaper database such as *Newsbank Access World News* to find *statistics*, 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**"

Nouns make the best search terms. 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.

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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**