Databases: Timesavers & Tips

Although each database is unique, there are similarities that can help you when you are searching. Here are a few tips to make your search more successful.

Terminology
- Make sure you know your topic well enough to come up with relevant search words.
- Know the language your discipline uses (avoid slang and street names).
- Know any scientific terms related to your topic.
- Are there related or synonymous terms for what you are searching?
- Is the topic you're searching referred to by an acronym? If so, you should search both the acronym and the spelled out words. Try this with the **OR** Boolean operator.

Example if you are researching Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, search "FASD OR Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder".

Database Search Options
Databases can have specific rules about the keywords or terms used to describe their contents. Similarly, each database provides access to different sets of publications. For this reason, searching for thesaurus terms or publication name can be more effective in certain cases.

- Use the thesaurus built into the database. Thesaurus search is available on several databases, and you can use it to find an authorized search term and also the related, broader or narrower search term options. Check the Ebsco Thesaurus Guide for more info.

- Use the Subject Terms function to view subjects alphabetically. This also allows you to choose several subject headings and search them simultaneously.

- Use the Publications option to search for a periodical title. This is helpful if you find a periodical that is particularly useful for your topic.

Search Strategies

Wildcard Operators and Truncation are symbols to use when you are not sure of the spelling of a word or you are searching for several variations of a word. Please read through the search tips offered in each database. Check some search strategies examples:

- When you are using a word with different spellings.
  Instead of searching COLOUR and COLOR separately, search COLO?R to include both spellings.

- When you are searching variations of the root of a word.
  If you are looking for information on children and learning disabilities you could search CHILD* AND LEARNING DISABILIT* This would find results with (child or childhood or children) and (learning disability or disabilities).

Boolean search is a way of searching several word combinations at once by using a combination of the three main Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT. Check the Boolean Operators Handout to learn more.

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