

Article Databases: Tips for Effective Searching

Some things to think about when searching online databases/resources:

- *Topic, kind of information you need:* Analyze your research question, and think about where you might look for information on various parts of your question.
- *Search interface of the resource:* Examine what features/options it offers to limit or broaden your search.
- *Nature/coverage of the database:* Is it subject specific or general/multidisciplinary? What does that mean about the keywords you will be using?
- *'Language' used by the database/resource, discipline/trade:* Think about the various words used to discuss the particular concepts you are interested in, and how that determines your search terms.
- *'Help' / 'Search tips' sections:* These will let you know how to search the database effectively.

Range of search features in various databases you can take advantage of:

- Use AND, OR, NOT, *, ?, w/para, w/2, etc. to combine search terms and narrow your results. Databases will often have 'help' sections on how these features can be used in their particular search engine.
 - e.g. searching for 'virtual teams' AND 'management' will find articles talking about both of these terms in the same article.
 - e.g. searching for 'virtual teams' OR 'teleconferencing' will find articles talking about one or the other.
 - e.g. searching for 'colo?r*' will find articles that mention any of the following:
 - color, colour, colorful, colourful, colors, colours
- '**Keyword** searches' will find more articles, but not all will be relevant.
- '**Descriptor/subject term** searches' may find more relevant articles, but fewer of them.
- Use the '**Thesaurus**' to find what descriptor/subject terms are used to express the concept you are interested in, for a particular database.
- You can narrow your search by selecting a specific **field**, e.g. title.
- You can **limit** or **refine a search** by different constraints, e.g. publication type, publication date, etc.
- Use '**Search History**' to review past searches, or combine more than one search.
- Trace '**cited references**' and '**citing references**' to find other relevant articles.