

Tips for Literature Searching

Academic article: A published work written by experts in a field, whose purpose is to advance understanding in that field. Also called a scholarly article.

Academic journal: A published work that contains academic articles. Also called a scholarly journal.

Peer-review: A way to label articles in which other experts in the same field have signed off on the quality and importance of the research presented.


Database: A way to search hundreds or thousands of journals at one time.

- “Multidisciplinary” databases and “discipline-specific” databases

In the databases: Keyword searching! (see sample at the end)

- No full sentences; feed library resources small bites
- General vs. specific (Black Panther ↔ superhero films)
- Synonyms, related concepts, alternate spellings (kids, children, youth, adolescents) - what you put in is what you will get out

Search tips:

- Connect search terms
- Use filters like peer review + date
- Do you want your results sorted by relevance or recency?
- Full text - find it button 
- Save the permanent link (not the URL)
- Think about the scholarly conversation - follow citations backward (reference list) and forward (Google Scholar “cited by”)
- Interlibrary Loan (ILL): If you find a citation for an article you want, but we don’t have the full text, we’ll get it for you through ILL!

****Evaluate your results, revise your strategy, try different databases, ask for help!****

Evaluating Sources

- Purpose: What is the source’s purpose? Why was it created? Who is the intended audience?
- Authority: Who created the information? What is their authority and what are their credentials? What is their point of view? What possible biases might they have?
- Date: When was the information created? Has it been updated?
- Documentation: What sources are cited in this information? How can you verify the information and analysis?

Sample keyword search

Advanced Search

Search Terms

	Terms		Field	Finds results
Search for	<input type="text" value="kids OR children OR youth"/>	in	<input type="text" value="Keyword"/>	cont
And <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="text" value="football"/>	in	<input type="text" value="Keyword"/>	cont
And <input type="button" value="v"/>	<input type="text" value="concussion OR 'head injury'"/>	in	<input type="text" value="Keyword"/>	cont
<input type="button" value="Search"/>	<input type="button" value="Add a Row +"/>			