

Database Searching Best Practices

ACRL Frame: Searching as Strategic Exploration

Purpose: Students will learn skills necessary for effectively searching library databases and catalogs, including identifying search terms, combining search terms, subject searching, and refining searches. This is designed to be done primarily outside of class time in order to provide students further opportunities to practice searching and to maximize hands-on work in the face-to-face session.

Resources: LibGuide pages: Generating Search Terms (Keywords), Combining Search Terms, Refining Search Results, and Using Subject Headings. These pages can be added individually or in combination, as needed to the class course guide. Database Searching Best Practices handout.

Time Required: 30–45 minutes outside class, 10 minutes to debrief in class

Lesson Plan:

Pre-Work (Students): Students should read through the assigned guide pages and complete the accompanying practice exercises ahead of class.

In Class:

Debrief in class using the following reflection questions (may use a Jamboard to gather feedback):

1. What worked well when you were searching?
2. What didn't work well?
3. What questions do you have?

Use student questions as an opportunity to provide further instruction on any confusing aspects of searching.