

## Research Database Searching Concepts



### What is a research database?

A research database is a collection of citations from thousands of periodicals like newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, technical reports, conference proceedings, book chapters and much more. In many cases a link will be available to the full-text of the article directly on the database or a simple click on the **Article Linker** will seek out the full-text availability across library resources. There are many different databases accessible from the [SBU Library website](#), each covering specialized subjects or multi-disciplinary coverage. See "Databases & E-Journals" for lists by subject or title.

### Why use the databases when everything is on the internet for free?

Because everything is *not* available on the internet for free. The databases we subscribe to contain information that the library has paid to access. You get to use it for free because you are a member of the Stony Brook community. The resources you can access through these databases are evaluated by librarians and added to our resources for use by students, faculty and researchers. Much of what is contained within the databases is of research quality and not necessarily available to the general public through web search engines like Google, Yahoo! or Ask.com.

### Searching Databases

Searching a library database is *not* like searching the free web. To begin searching in a database you should break down the research question into concepts and make lists of alternate words that you will use to construct a search. Decide exactly what you are trying to find out. Then you will enter your keywords into the search box and hit enter. Each database allows users to limit by date or other parameters.



### What are the *effects of media violence on children?*

Concepts:	Effects	Media	Violence	Children
Alternate words:	Behavior	Video games	Sexual situations	Schoolchildren
Decide what you are really looking for:	Achievement	Television	Language	Teenagers
	Friendships	Music	Blood and gore	Preschoolers

## Keyword Search:

uses natural language, is very flexible but can give you irrelevant results. You can search for terms like: internet, racism, global warming. These are very broad so you would need to use additional keywords with these searches;

*example: preschoolers and television and behavior*

## Subject Search:

uses controlled vocabulary, is more precise but can be limiting. Each database uses its own vocabulary; it would be difficult to know them all. Think in terms of the yellow pages-there is no listing for “cars”- you need to check automobiles.

*example: Motion picture-history....(not movies)*

## AND, OR, NOT:

Use these words to join 2 or more keywords or subjects terms together in order to make your results broader or narrower.

Examples:

Using **AND** to make your search more narrow and focused; “cats **AND** dogs” will retrieve articles that contain both the terms cats and dogs in the same article.

Using **OR** to make a search broader and retrieve more: “cats **OR** dogs” will retrieve articles that have either the term cats in them or the term dogs in the article.

Use **NOT** to limit results to *not* include certain terms: “Marriage **NOT** homosexual”.

## When to use the \* or other wildcard symbols:

Another way to broaden a search is to use the \*. Use this with the root of a word, for example: **instruct\***. This will retrieve instruct, instructor, instructors, instruction, instructions, instructional. Each database has its own wildcard symbols, check the help screen in your database.

