Libraries and Learning Services

Find Articles:

Find Articles – Where to start

Find Articles – Using databases

Learning Objectives

Find Articles: Where to start

At the end of the workshop you will be able to:

- Find full text scholarly articles quickly and efficiently using ‘Library Search: Articles & more’ and Google Scholar

Find Articles: Using databases

At the end of the workshop you will be able to:

- Use individual databases in order to find subject-specific articles
- Apply various techniques to broaden and narrow search results
- Understand the benefits of Subject Heading searches

Learning Support Services

Email: learningservices@auckland.ac.nz

Phone: 09-373 7599 ext 83797/89744
# Table of Contents

Find Articles: Where to start .............................................................................................................. 3  
Where to start? ................................................................................................................................. 3  
Google Scholar ............................................................................................................................... 3  
Plan your search strategy: ............................................................................................................ 5  
Tips for getting better results: Power searching ............................................................................ 5  
Library Search: Articles & More ................................................................................................... 6  
More information: Library workshops ............................................................................................ 6  

Find Articles: Using databases ....................................................................................................... 7  
Identifying key concepts or ideas ................................................................................................. 7  
Combining your search terms ....................................................................................................... 7  
Truncation ...................................................................................................................................... 10  
Phrase searching .......................................................................................................................... 11  
Refining your search results ........................................................................................................ 11  
What are Subject Headings? ....................................................................................................... 13  
Personal accounts and saved search alerts .................................................................................... 15  

Find Articles: Where to start

Your first assignment/research is due and your lecturer states that you must refer to at least five "scholarly journal articles".

But what are scholarly journal articles and where do you find them?

Watch the following video from RMIT for a concise overview – ‘What’s a library database?’ http://vimeo.com/48113402

Scholarly or academic journals are usually published by a university or institution and contain research or specific information. Popular magazines are usually commercial, written for a general audience and contain current news.

For a concise overview of the differences between scholarly and popular journals, have a look at the following guide: http://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/subject-guides/bus/topicguides/academic_popularjnls.htm

A database is a searchable collection of information. In libraries the most common databases are collections of newspaper, magazine and journal articles. Some databases may contain images, audio-visual materials, reports, theses and dissertations, e-books, statistical data etc.

Where to start?

Library Search: Articles & More and Google Scholar are two great places to start searching for articles as they are easy to use and they search across multiple databases at the same time.

Google Scholar provides a simple way to search the Internet for 'scholarly' material. A lot of articles held in the Library's databases also appear in Google Scholar. It will also pick up material which is freely available on the Internet.

Activity:

How do you access Google Scholar? ........................................................................................................................................................................
Use your own topic or try ONE of the search examples below:

**Arts/Humanities examples**

a) *Is animal testing in research ethical? You must use recent articles (last 5 years) to support your argument.*

**OR**

b) *As part of your course work you are required to write a 2,000 word essay on the influence of peers on alcohol consumption amongst young people. The assignment requires you to find recent articles and use examples from New Zealand.*

**Science/Engineering examples**

a) *You are required to write a 1,500 word report on seismic activity and bridge safety. You must find 5 recent scholarly articles, including material relevant to NZ.*

**OR**

b) *You are required to write a 2,000 word assignment on how honeybees use the waggle dance to communicate information. You must use 5 recent scholarly articles.*

**Business example**

a) *You are required to write an assignment discussing corporate social responsibility. You must include examples of how this applies to specific organisations, either national or international.*

---

**Activity – Search for articles using Google Scholar**

1. How many results did you get? .............................

2. What keywords did you type in?..............................................................

3. Looking at the first page of results, how relevant do they look? ......................

4. How could you modify your search to get more/less/better results? .......................

..............................................................
Plan your search strategy:

- Make sure you understand your question/topic
- **Identify keywords** and phrases
- Think of **synonyms** and related terms
- **Try searching using various combinations** of the keywords/synonyms you identified.

**Example:** *What influence do peers have on the drinking behaviour of adolescents?*

**Keywords/Phrases:** peers, drinking behaviour, adolescents

**Synonyms:**
- **Peers:** friends, peer pressure, peer group, social group
- **Drinking behaviour:** drinking, alcohol, binge drinking, alcohol abuse
- **Adolescents:** teenagers, youth, young adult

**Try searching different combinations**

- “peer pressure” drinking teenagers
- peers “binge drinking” adolescents

**Tips for getting better results: Power searching**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s the Problem?</th>
<th>Which Power search technique helps?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Too few results</strong></td>
<td><strong>Too many results</strong></td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Activity – Modify your search

Pick two relevant search techniques from the table above and apply these to your search.

1. How did these affect your original search? .................................................................
2. Which worked best? Why? ..........................................................................................
3. How did it change your results? ..................................................................................

### Library Search: Articles & More

Library Search: Articles & more enables you to search across a wide range of Library databases as well as the Library’s catalogue (books, journals, theses, videos, conference proceedings and more).

### Activity – Search for articles using Library Search: Articles & More

Instructions: redo the same search you did in Google Scholar (or try your own topic).

1. How many results did you get? ..................................................................................
2. How do the results compare to those found in Google Scholar?............................
3. How could you modify or refine your search to get more/less/better results?
......................................................................................................................................
4. How can you access the full text of articles? ............................................................... 

### More information: Library workshops

For more information on finding articles and using Library resources, attend Library workshops:

- Finding articles: How to use databases
- How to master Google and Google Scholar
Find Articles: Using databases

In this section of the course we will explore the various ways you can combine your topic keywords and synonyms and the effect this has on your search results.

Identifying key concepts or ideas

In this section of the course we will explore the various ways you can combine your topic keywords and synonyms and the effect this has on your search results.

Write down your assignment topic:

My topic is:

To help you plan your search, use the concept table below to enter your keywords and synonyms.

Look for 2 or 3 main ideas in an assignment or topic

Consider rephrasing the topic in your own words. The ideas you choose to emphasise are probably the main ones. Use the main ideas/keywords for composing a database search.

My main ideas / keywords are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My main ideas / keywords are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brainstorm synonyms

Find synonyms (similar words) for the main ideas / keywords.
Using synonyms, you will get more results and better coverage.

Find synonyms through:

- own brainstorming
- thesaurus
- course material
- dictionaries

Consider:

- singular, plural, British / American spellings.

My main synonyms are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My main synonyms are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

|                       |
|                       |
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Activity 1: Identify key ideas and find synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The topic: <strong>What effect does coffee have on mood or well-being?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The main ideas/keywords in this topic are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Synonyms for each keyword/idea are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIP:</strong> To find synonyms, use Google, online thesaurus or dictionary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combining your search terms

Although database search screens may look different most of them work using Boolean Operators. Boolean Operators are AND, OR, and NOT. These operators are used to indicate the relationship between different search words.


2. Type in keywords: COFFEE and MOOD and click Search. How many results have you found?

   - I have found ___ results.

3. Change word AND into OR in the drop-down menu between the search boxes and click Search.

   - I have found ___ results.

4. Change word OR into NOT in the drop-down menu between the search boxes and click Search.

   - I have found ___ results.

5. How do words AND/OR/NOT influence your search? Why is the number of results found different? .................................................................
**AND** – all words must be found in each result

Eg, if you were looking for information on how cooking affects the vitamins in fruit you would want each of your results to have all three words:

```
cooking AND vitamins AND fruit
```

Depending on which database you are using, the search page may have only one box to enter your search terms…

```
fruit and vitamins and cooking
```

… or it may have multiple boxes …

```
fruit

AND vitamins

AND cooking
```

… or it may have boxes with drop-down menus that function like the Boolean operators …

```
Search for: fruit vitamins cooking
```

… or it may have boxes with descriptions that function like Boolean operators.

**OR** – results must contain at least one of the words

Eg, authors could talk about the vitamins OR minerals OR nutrients in fruit so you would want results to include at least one of these three words

Depending on which database you are using, the search page may have only one box to enter your search terms…

```
vitamins or minerals or nutrients
```

… or it may have multiple boxes …

```

```

vitamins

OR minerals

OR nutrients
```

… or it may have boxes with drop-down menus that function like the Boolean operators …

```
Search for: vitamins minerals nutrients
```

… or it may have boxes with descriptions that function like Boolean operators.
Combining Boolean Operators AND & OR

Most often what you need to do is search using both AND and OR. For example: vitamins OR minerals AND fruit. A Concept Table is one way of visualising your search and may help you organise your thoughts.

- Use one column for each concept / idea and join concepts / ideas with AND
- Below each idea, list synonyms/ similar word and join synonyms with OR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OR</th>
<th>AND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vitamins</td>
<td>fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minerals</td>
<td>vegetables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different databases will carry out an AND/OR search in a different order; either left to right or AND before OR.

To ensure the search is carried out how you want always put brackets around the OR section of your search (vitamins OR minerals) AND fruit.

Depending on which database you are using, the search page may have only one box to enter your search terms...

(vitamins or minerals) and fruit

... or it may have multiple boxes ...

... or it may have boxes with descriptions that function like Boolean operators.

Truncation

Many databases allow you to chop off a keyword at the point where variable endings begin, so that you can obtain more articles of relevance. This is especially useful if you find too few results. Entering a truncated keyword in a search will bring up all the results with various endings, eg:

employ* will find: employ, employs, employer, employee, employment...

Different databases have different symbols to stand in for ‘missing’ characters. Check Help or Search tips to find out what the symbol is.
Activity 2: Truncate your search

1. Which symbol is used for truncation in Academic Search Premier database?

TIP: Go to Help > Wildcard & Truncation Symbols to find out.

2. Which words can you truncate in your existing search query?

3. Where would you place the truncation symbol in those words?

TIP: Think about the point where only the sense or meaning you want is still possible.
For example:

governm? will find government, governments, governmental

govern? will bring in governance, Governor, governor, governess

4. Repeat the search with truncated keywords. How many results have you found now?

Phrase searching

Identify any phrases in your search strategy. When together in that order, these words make up a concept that may be different and/or more specific than the words’ individual meanings; your search results can be significantly altered by phrase searching.

Often, placing quotation marks around those words ensures they appear as a phrase in the results, eg, “climate change”.

However not all databases use this convention, and it may not apply to all search types in a database. Check the database help or search tips!

Refining your search results

Full text

Limiting to full text will exclude references from the results where only the citation and abstract are available in that database. Please note: limiting to full text may mean you exclude references to articles that are available in full text elsewhere.
**Scholarly or peer-reviewed**

Books, articles and other sources are often created for particular audiences. The most useful information in a university context is usually **evidence-based research** - rather than popular or individual opinion.

The following terminology may be used to describe evidence-based research:

- scholarly
- peer-reviewed*
- academic
- research

*The work will have been reviewed by other researchers expert in that topic*

Some databases allow you to limit search results to information intended for these audiences.

**Field searching**

Many search interfaces have menus of options which can limit searching to particular fields.

![Field searching interface](image)

Typical fields are:

- Citation and Abstract
- Title (eg article title)
- Author
- Subject Heading
- Source (eg journal title)

Specialist databases may include fields for particular purposes eg stock exchange codes, Medical Subject Headings, etc.

**Date, language, document or publication type**

Many databases allow you to limit search results by selecting from menus of languages, information types or dates. Sometimes you can enter a required date range.

**Search History**

Many databases offer a search history that allows you to **view and edit previous searches**. Note: search history only displays searches from the current session.
What are Subject Headings?

In Library databases, Subject Headings are standard terms for particular themes/topics. For example, the subject heading *Adolescence* may cover *teenagers*, *adolescents*, *youth* and variations of those words. All articles that are mainly about this group of people will be given the Subject Heading of *Adolescence*.

Different databases may use other wording for particular subject headings. So in another database, the Subject Heading for this group of people may be *Teenagers*. Different databases may also refer to Subject Headings themselves using other words, eg: Subject terms, Index terms, Descriptors or Controlled vocabulary.

Some databases may provide various lists and searches based on subject headings, but use other terminology to describe them. For example:

- **Topic searching**: is based around subject heading data;
- **Thesaurus**: some databases list their subject headings in a specific section called a thesaurus. It can be very useful to consult the database thesaurus for effective search terms.
### Activity 3: Using Subject Headings to improve your search

1. If you have selected any search limits earlier, please deselect them (*eg, full text, peer-reviewed, date...*)

2. Choose an article from your result list.

3. Click on the article title.

4. Which Subject Terms are listed on the article record?

5. Click on one of the relevant Subject Term links (*eg, coffee*). How many results on this topic have you found?

6. Click on **Subject Terms** in the top blue menu bar

7. Type a relevant term into the search box (*eg, caffeine*) and click **Browse** to find related Subject Terms in this database.

8. **Select** (tick box) the relevant subject term from the list.

9. Choose **OR** from the drop down box to combine your synonyms

10. Click **ADD**. The terms will appear in the Search box.
11. Type in an additional relevant term into the search box (eg, mood) and click Browse to find related Subject Terms in this database.

12. Select (tick box) the relevant subject term from the list.

13. Choose AND from the drop down box to look for the intersection between caffeine and mood

14. Click ADD. The terms will appear in the Search box.

Advantages of Subject Headings
- Don’t have to think of all the possible keywords, synonyms and truncation
- Results are mainly about the topic; not just mentioned in passing
- Can use subject headings to find all other articles on that topic

Personal accounts and saved search alerts

Some databases allow you to set up a personal account or profile with a login and password. Having a personal account means you can keep up to date with publications on a particular topic or topics.

Options available with personal accounts include:

- Saving searches for as long as required. Saved searches may include: keyword or subject searches; particular journals; articles citing another one of interest
- Setting up alerts to notify you of new data fitting saved searches.

The key to receiving useful notifications or alerts is to save effective searches
Saved search alerts are particularly useful for longer term research, such as that undertaken at graduate level or above.