DATABASE SEARCH TIPS

I NEED JOURNAL (not MAGAZINE) ARTICLES

Many of the library’s databases allow you to limit your search to journals only. For example, in EBSCOhost select the Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals limiter on the far left.

The library’s Scholarly Journals webpage contains a search box that only retrieves articles from scholarly journals.

I NEED TO IMPROVE MY SEARCH RESULTS

- **Avoid phrase searches:** Some databases try to find exact phrase matches. Try separating the important words in your phrase with the word AND. For example:
  - Instead of “should the United States bring back the military draft” use “United States AND military draft.”
  - Instead of “smoking in public places” use “smoking AND public places.”

- **Use synonyms:** If you can’t find any records on your topic, think of other words, phrases, or synonyms to describe it. For example:
  - “Cellular telephones” instead of “cell phones”
  - “Capital punishment” instead of “death penalty”
  - “Same sex marriage” instead of “gay marriage”

- **Subject terms:** Use subject terms to focus or narrow your search. To determine the correct subject term for your topic:
  - Perform a keyword search. Review your results and pick out the relevant records. Look at the subject terms or descriptors assigned to those records.
  - Search or browse an alphabetical list of subject terms. Look for a link labeled Subject Terms, Subject Headings, or Thesaurus.

- **Boolean operators:** Use the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT to refine your search (some databases require that you put Boolean connectors in capital letters – if in doubt, capitalize them).
  - AND allows you to narrow your search by combining terms. Only records containing all of your search terms will be retrieved.
    - “guns AND violence”
    - “social media AND communication”
OR broadens your search by retrieving records containing one, some, or all of your search terms. OR allows you to search for related terms simultaneously rather than performing a separate search on each one:

* “capital punishment OR death penalty”
* “teenagers OR adolescents OR young adults”

NOT narrows your search. It eliminates records containing the words following NOT.

* “pets NOT dogs” (finds articles about pets but not dogs)
* “terrorists NOT Isis” (finds articles about terrorists other than Isis)
* NOTE: Use not with caution. It might remove relevant results.

Enclose multiple search terms within parentheses.

* (capital punishment OR death penalty) AND (racism OR bias)

- **Truncate**: Use an asterisk (*) at the end of a search term to find variant endings of that term.
  
  o terroris* finds terrorism as well as terrorists

- **Search all fields, not just the default fields**: By default many databases look for your search terms in the citations, abstracts, and subject terms but not within the full-text articles themselves.

  For example, in the EBSCOhost databases change Select a Field to TX All Text. This forces the database to look for your search terms within the full-text articles.

**THE ARTICLE ISN’T AVAILABLE FULL TEXT**

Depending on the availability of the article one of the following links will appear:

- **Full Text Finder**: The article is available in another library database or a print copy is available in a campus library. Clicking on Full Text Finder takes you into the other database or the library catalog.

- **Request this item through interlibrary loan**: The article is not available at MCC. Click on the link to request a copy from another library through MCC’s free interlibrary loan service.