

# DATABASE SEARCH TIPS

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## 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.
  - *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.