**Basic Search Tips**

Too Many Results? Narrow your search.

1. **Add Additional Keywords.**
   - In databases, *subject terms* can help you identify more narrow topics and keywords.

2. **Choose More Narrow Search Terms.**
   - Examples: • *Broader term: law*
     - *Narrower term: “environmental law”*

3. **Use Limiters.**
   - These are things like search fields (title or abstract), publication date, and format type.

4. **Search For A Short Phrase With Quotation Marks.**
   - Examples: • “environmental law”
     - “environmental justice”

Too Few Results? Broaden Your Search

1. **Choice Of Search Terms**
   - Choosing the right search terms is key.
     - • Experiment with related terms.
     - • In databases, *subject terms* can help you identify keywords.
     - • Use OR to search for multiple related terms at the same time.
     - (e.g. policy OR law)

2. **Too Many Search Terms**
   - Databases can be picky about search terms. Be selective.
     - • Begin with one or two search terms that best represent your topic.
       - Then add other terms as needed.
     - • Avoid long phrases and empty words like “the” and “how.”

3. **Too Many Limiters**
   - If you limited the search (e.g. by date or search field), remove the limiters and reassess.

4. **Narrow Topic**
   - For highly specific topics, you may locate sources on a broader related topic.
     - Examples: • *Narrow search: Bloomington Indiana AND environmental policy*
     - • *Broader search: United States AND state government AND environmental policy*

5. **Database Choice**
   - Different databases focus on different topics. Try the “Subjects” tab on the IUB Libraries homepage to view resources for different subjects.
**Boolean Operators**

Most library databases use Boolean operators (AND, OR, and NOT). You can use them to **broaden** or **narrow** your search results.

- **AND** searches for records that use both terms and narrows your results.
- **OR** searches for records that use either term and broadens your results.
- **NOT** excludes words from the search and narrows your results.

### Database Search Fields

Records in library databases are made of “fields.” Fields can help you narrow your search.

**Examples:**
- author
- date/year of publication
- title
- subject/descriptor
- abstract
- all text (searches the full text, if available)

### Improving Search Results with Fields

- Most databases automatically search by keyword (looking for the term anywhere in the record).
- Limit the search field for a term to narrow results.
- Fields are usually in drop down menus.
- If the database has a single search box with no drop down menu, look for an “Advanced Search” option.

### Phrase Searching

Use quotation marks or parentheses around search words to search for a phrase.

**Example:** “united nations peacekeeping forces”

### Nesting

Use parentheses to put search words into sets. Terms in parentheses are processed first. Use nesting with AND, OR, and NOT.

**Example:** success AND (education OR employment)

### Truncation

Broaden your search to include variant word endings and spellings. Enter the root of the word then the truncation symbol [usually an asterisk (*)].

**Example:** elect* = election, electoral, elections

### Wildcards

Substitute a symbol for just one character. The most commonly used wildcard symbol is a question mark (?).

**Example:** wom?n = woman, women