

Basic Searching: Part 3

Once you have entered your search into a database, there are a number of ways to refine your results to identify more specific articles relating to your topic.

Think of this process as learning the language of the database. Once you're both using the same terms, you'll be able to search more effectively.

Most databases have categories that appear in a column on the left or the right of the page.

By clicking on the categories you find most relevant (like date, subject, or resource type), you are further narrowing your search. Some databases allow you both to include and exclude categories too.

Another feature to look for is the thesaurus or list of suggested terms.

In a thesaurus you can see if the words you're using in your search are indexed in the database.

If they are not, you might consider switching to the key words the database uses —like "school class size" instead of "class size." This will help the database to understand your search terms better and retrieve more relevant results.

Sometimes suggested searches will pop up at the top of your page in the search box, as well.

Don't forget to check out the help tab in the database you're using to find out about the other features it might have.

And if you have any questions about a database or about this video, ask a librarian. We're happy to help!