



How to Efficiently Search Library Databases

Library databases contain reliable and credible information for your academic or research needs. This guide will provide you with step-by-step instructions on how to search library databases effectively, allowing you to access a wealth of scholarly resources.

1) Define Your Research Topic

Clearly identify your research question or topic to narrow down your search focus. Break your topic into keywords and synonyms that best represent your research area. *Your keywords become your search terms.*

2) Select the Appropriate Database

Choose the most relevant database(s) based on your research topic. Different [databases](#) specialize in various subject areas, so select those that align with your research needs. [OneSearch](#) is JCU's generic database, and a good starting point.

3) Utilize Advanced Search Techniques

Use advanced search options provided by the database to refine your search results. Combine keywords using [Boolean Operators](#) (AND, OR, NOT) for more precise results. Utilize quotation marks for exact phrase searches, and asterisks (*) for wildcard searches.

4) Review Search Results

Carefully examine the search results and read the abstracts to determine the relevance of each article to your research. Note the publication date, author credentials, and journal reputation to assess the credibility of the sources. Exclude any results that do not suit your criteria.

5) Narrow Down Your Search

If you have too many results, add more specific keywords to narrow down your search. Use database filters (e.g., publication date, publication type, subject) to refine your results further.

6) Access Full Text

If a full-text link is not immediately available, use the "Find It" or "Get it" options to access the full article through the library subscriptions. For advanced users: once you have chosen key texts you may want to use a literature mapping tool such as [Research Rabbit](#) to expand your results.

7) Cite Your Sources

When using information from the database, cite the sources properly according to the appropriate citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago).

8) Save and Organise

Save the articles or records that are most relevant to your research in a separate folder or use citation management tools like [EndNote](#) or [Zotero](#) to organize your references. Put your references into your essay plan.