Finding Articles by Topic

Step 1: Think about your topic. What are the concepts, keywords, and synonyms that describe it?

- Sample topic search: assessing math literacy
- Think about synonyms. List them.
  - Assess: assess, evaluate
  - Math: mathematics, algebra, geometry, word problems
  - Literacy: literacy, proficiency, ability
- Search Tip: Once you are in the database, consult the Thesaurus for alternative terms.

Step 2: Select an article database. http://www.library.appstate.edu/find/databases

- What discipline does the topic involve? Education, sociology, psychology, general?
- What type of information do you want? Current or historical? Scholarly? Qualitative or Quantitative?

Step 3: Login: Off-campus? Follow the prompts to authenticate.

Step 4: Go to the Advanced search screen.

- Search Tip: Use these tools when structuring your search: and or * “ “
  - AND between terms finds articles with both terms; OR finds articles with any or all terms
  - * use when search term could have variable endings; “ “ use to find a phrase

- Using Advanced search enter your search strategy:
  First search box: assess* or evaluat*
  Second search box: algebra or “word problems”
  Third search box: litera* or proficien* or abilit*

Step 5: Refine your search by setting Limits, then execute your Search.

- Choose options for scholarly articles, publication dates, and more. You can refine results later too.

Step 6: Review search results. Searching is iterative and nonlinear. Have courage! 😊

- Read the abstracts of relevant articles. Note the subject, keyword or descriptor terms.
- Tweak your search using subjects, keywords or synonyms you’ve newly identified.
- Consider searching another database in a related discipline. Successful search terms in an education database might need to be modified in a psychology database.
- Follow the Full-Text or FIND@ASU links. We don’t have the article? Use ILLiad to request it.
- Search Tip: Create an account (EBSCO, ProQuest) to save articles and more in the cloud.

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