The Research Process

- Exploring
- Searching
- Refining

Get Started on a Research Project.
All research begins with a question:
- What do I want to find out?
- What do I already know?
- Do I care about what I am researching?

Find the information you need.
As you are searching for information there are a few things you should keep in mind:
- Spend some time thinking about keywords you can use to search with.
- Learn how different search engines or databases work. Try more than one, as you will likely get different results.
- Always check the information you find with another source to make sure it is accurate.

Understand the information you've found.
- Make sure the information is relevant to your topic.
- Pay attention to the quality of your information.
- Make note of the copyright date, this will indicate currency.
- Learn the difference between primary and secondary sources.
- Be aware of the differences between fact and opinion.
- Organize your information.

Use the information you've found.
- Do you understand the information that you found?
- Does the information fit your needs?
- Evaluate your information for accuracy.
**Tips for Searching**

**Keyword** searching is the most common type of searching and uses natural language, or words that you would naturally think of for topics. This type of searching is extremely flexible runs the risk of yielding irrelevant, too many, or too few results.

**Subject** searching uses a predefined controlled vocabulary, or a series of terms that someone else has applied to documents. It is less flexible because one must know the exact subject heading term. With subject searching the database will only look for subject words in the subject heading or descriptor fields. The results are usually very relevant to the topic.

**Truncation** broadens your search to include variations on word spellings and endings. It is particularly good if there are many different ways to spell your topic.

To use truncation: enter the root word and put the truncation symbol at the end of the root word

- Examples: Chem* = chemists, chemistry
- Truncation symbols vary by database and commonly include: *, !, ?, or #

**Wildcards** are similar to truncation; useful in cases where a word can be spelled in multiple ways due to international differences in English.

- Examples: Thes!s = thesis, theses
- Vapo?r = vapor, vapour

**Where do I find the information I need?**

Library research databases contain information from published works such as magazines, professional journals, newspaper articles, encyclopedias, and reference books. They are also well organized, and are by keywords, author, magazine title, date, etc. Library research databases often contain full-text articles that can be printed, saved, or emailed. Different databases focus on different subjects, so you might find something in one database that you did not find in another.

However, there is often a trade off between speed and accuracy, so keep these issues in mind when choosing between library databases and other websites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Research Databases...</th>
<th>Websites...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get their information from professionals or experts in the field</td>
<td>Can be written by anyone regardless of expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contain published works where facts are checked</td>
<td>Website content is not necessarily checked by an expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are easy to cite in a bibliography and most create the citation for you</td>
<td>Often don’t provide the information necessary to create a complete citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can help you narrow your topic or suggest related subjects</td>
<td>Often aren’t organized to support student research needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are updated frequently and include the date of publication</td>
<td>May not indicate when the information was updated</td>
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