Searching **library databases**

The trick with searching databases is knowing there is a way to "speak" the database's language. These steps help you "translate" your topic, have more control over your search results, and avoid missing key sources.

Choose a database to search
For counselling psychology, use PsycINFO.
For education-specific articles, use ERIC or Education Source.
For a multidisciplinary topic, use Academic Search Premier or Google Scholar[1].
To search almost all resources SFU has access to, use the Catalogue. (You may want to use the Advanced Search.)

Your research question
Write what you're interested in as a statement or question.

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1. Identify key concepts
Next, identify 2 or 3 key components from your research question. Dissecting a topic into its component parts or concepts is an essential step which makes it easier to find all the relevant information.

Concept #1: _____

Concept #2: _____

Concept #3: _____

2. Brainstorm related terms
For each concept above, write other terms that have similar meaning. Brainstorm related terms others could use to describe the ideas. Consider historical terms, terms used in other geographical areas, abbreviations, or broader ideas. You can add to this later, if nothing comes to mind right away!

Concept #1:	Concept #2:	Concept #3:

3. Connect search terms "logically"
Combine your key words and related terms together using AND and OR. Use OR to connect related terms[2], then use AND to connect different concepts together.

4. Refine your search results
If needed, use filters to focus on what's most relevant.
- Want cutting-edge, or historical, knowledge? Limit by publication date.
- Want an overview of the research? Limit by methodology "literature reviews."

5. Revise + repeat
As you review your search results, make note of concepts you'd like to incorporate, focus on, or exclude.
- Are there any related terms that you can add to your search? Carefully read the information in the detailed item records, paying attention to the subject terms and abstract.
- Getting too many irrelevant articles? Exclude concepts with NOT (e.g. NOT nursing).
- Want fewer results? Add another concept with AND, or experiment with searching in the "Title" field.
- Want more results? Remove one of your concepts, clear your search filters, or consider broader search terms.

For more tips, to get in touch with questions or request an appointment, go to bit.ly/educ-guide

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[1] While Google Scholar isn't technically a database, it has operators that work similarly to AND and OR. Search for *google advanced search operators.*
[2] When using OR, put parentheses around each group of related terms. This tells the database to search for the group of related terms first, before combining it with other concepts. Remember your order of operations from math class? ;) e.g. *(teacher OR educator) AND (math OR science)*

Research Question:		Key word bank:	
Date	Database	Search terms used	Notes *(subject terms or key authors identified to search for in the future)*
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