Searching Skills

This pyramid will help you think about how to search.

The bottom of the pyramid, Identifying Where to Search, is the basis for all the searching you will do.

*Search Terms* and *Search Settings* represent the next level of search strategy.

*Limiters*, at the top, is a more advanced option that will help you narrow your results without much effort.

Quick Tip:
Simply scroll down or use the arrows to view the slides
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This Identifying Where to Search

The Information comes in many forms. When you come across a problem that needs researching, you must first identify what type of information you will need to solve your problem, and select a source that will give you access to that type of information.
For a school assignment you will most likely need trustworthy information published in a source with a scholarly focus such as a journal or newspaper article, book, or reference book.

For a work problem, you may want to consult similar sources or find websites that focus on your field.
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This Identifying Where to Search
Taking the time to identify where to look will make your search faster and easier because you can be sure that databases contain journal articles, library catalogs contain books, and search engines contain lists of websites.
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Identifying Where to Search

Search Settings

Limiters

Search Terms

Search Terms.
Now that you know where to look, you need to figure out the best way to ask that source for information. Search engines like Google will let us type entire questions into the search bar and get a list of results. Even though this may work in a few powerful search engines, it is not the best way to search.
If you type a question into a library catalog or online database, the computer looks for every single word and will only give you results if the article or book has all of those words in its record.
Effective searching involves picking out 2-3 key words or phrases to search. If you want information on the history of trains, for example, you could type "trains" or "train history" into the search bar. Expand your search further by trying "locomotives," or even "steam engines." It is always a good idea to have multiple search options in case your first attempt doesn’t find useful results.
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Search Settings
If you have good search terms, you’ll be more likely to get good results. Another way to start with good results is to make use of any settings on the main search page.

In databases such as Academic Search Complete, you can select a “Full Text” option from the main search page. In the library catalog, you can choose to search by author or title, as well as the default “words or phrase” from the main search page.
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**Search Settings**
Choosing these options before you hit "search" for the first time will give you more accurate results. For example, Nursing students can only use articles published in the last 5 years. Taking the time to tell the database to only return articles from the last 5 years means all results will have the correct publication dates.
Limiters

The last thing you can do is apply limiters once you have completed an initial search. Most databases allow for some type of limiting. NC LIVE databases allow you to limit by subject, date, and even type of publication. Search engines like Google allow you to limit to only images, videos, news, etc.

Limiting allows you to narrow your search without typing in any new search terms, saving you time in the long run.
Need Help?
Contact us!

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