

Search Tips

Use keywords

- Do not search as you would in Google (e.g., instead of 'What causes diabetes?' use keywords such as 'diabetes' and 'causes')
- Use speech marks for phrases of two or more words (e.g., "Treaty of Waitangi")
- Resources such as Credo or Wikipedia are good places to identify keywords related to your topic



Examples

Assignment topic: Assess the impact that social media has had on recent outbreaks of civil unrest.

Keywords:

"social media" "civil unrest"

Use related terms

- Improve your search by using synonyms (different words with the same meaning) (e.g., if searching for 'teenagers,' also search 'adolescents').
Use both words so you do not miss important resources
- Use a thesaurus to help find synonyms or Google 'synonym' and your keyword
- Use OR to combine synonyms in your searches (e.g., teenagers OR adolescents)



"social media" OR "social networking"

"civil unrest" OR revolution OR riots

Alternate endings

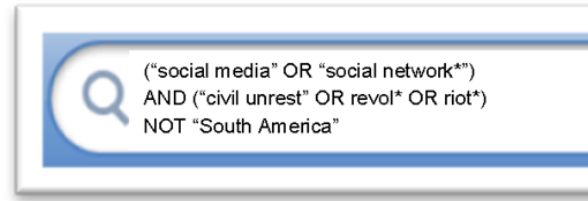
- When searching for a word that can have multiple endings use truncation (e.g., when searching for words such as child, children, and childhood, use child* to include them all)
- Some databases may use '?' instead of '*'. Use the database's help if you are unsure



"social network**"	- network, networks, networking
riot*	- riot, riots, rioting
revol*	- revolt, revolution, revolutions

Combine your terms

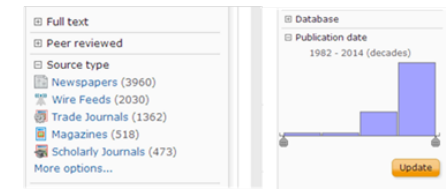
- Use AND, OR, NOT to combine your terms
 - AND will search for all terms
 - OR will return results with at least one of your terms
 - NOT will exclude results (e.g., cats NOT dogs)
- Use brackets to keep the parts of your search distinct



Decreasing your results

- Make keywords more specific or add extra keywords
- Use limiters to limit results (e.g., limit to a specific date range or resource type, or to peer reviewed or full-text resources only, or other database specific limiters). Limiters are usually on the left or right margins
- Select a subject specific database rather than a general one
- Be wary of using keywords that can be used in multiple contexts

Extra keywords: e.g., impact OR affect
More specific keywords: e.g., Twitter, Facebook
Use limiters: e.g. recent dates are more relevant for this topic



Increasing your results

- Broaden your search using synonyms (see Use Related Terms)
- Consider reducing the number of keywords. Exclude the least important
- Use truncation (see Alternate Endings)
- Use broader terms (especially for books)
- Try searching other library resources

Use more synonyms: e.g., “online communication,” “civil disturbance”
Use broader terms: e.g., ‘politics’ is broader than ‘civil unrest’
Other resources: Check the relevant Subject Guide



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