

Research Tips

It is important to find and use accurate and current information. Use the following criteria to evaluate any resource that you will be using.

- **Authority:** who is writing this and are they qualified to make these statements?
- **Accuracy:** how do you know the information is accurate and how is the information checked for accuracy?
- **Objectivity:** is the information one-sided or is there a balance of other points of view?
- **Currency:** how old is the information and is it still useful?
- **Coverage:** what does this information cover and is it clear about the limits of its coverage?

Research tips for online databases

Accessing a database requires some basic skills to tap into the information. Unlike a book through which you can browse, to get information from a database you need to know how to search.

Using Keywords:

Keyword: any word or phrase that is significant or meaningful to what you are looking for.

- Keywords are the most **flexible** way to search because they are a “free text.” This means that the search will bring up any term anywhere that includes the keyword.
- A **keyword search** will be wide and broad because this type of search will bring up anything with that keyword in it and might lead to too many hits. Too many hits are as bad as too few hits because it will take a long time to sort through them.
- To narrow down your search use search operators. **Search operators**, also known as **Boolean operators**, will help you limit your search by defining the relationship between your search terms. You can also narrow down your search by specifying other criteria such as date ranges and type of material (full text documents, journals, books).
 - **AND** is a Boolean operator that specifies that you want both terms together.
 - authors **and** writers **and** poets
 - **OR** is another Boolean operator that specifies that you want either search term, they don't have to be together. This expands your search to include both terms.
 - writers **or** poets
 - **TRUNCATION** lets the system know that you want all words that stem from the original word. Each database uses a different symbol for truncation, sometimes called a wildcard. Click on **help** in the database you are searching to find out which symbols are used as a wildcard.
 - *Latin** will bring up *Latino* and *Latina*

continued

Research Tips (continued)

Write down some keywords you will use in your search.

1.

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