Searching Databases:
Tips and Tricks

Licensed databases at UNB Libraries are powerful search tools that sort through numerous publications and allow you to craft and modify your searches to meet your needs.
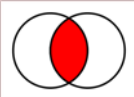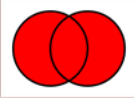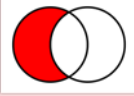
Note that:

o Though many of our databases have different interfaces, they operate based on the same principles.

o **Help options** within databases provide additional tips for browsing, viewing, saving, and organizing your search results.

o Your search may retrieve results that have direct links to **html full-text** or **pdf full-text** but you may also find links that ask you to **Check for full-text**. This option will redirect your query to UNB's print and electronic holding or the **document delivery system** (if we don't have the material).

o Unlike search engines, such as Google, library databases usually find exactly what you ask for based on **vocabulary** preferred by the database. Your search will fail to produce results if you do not use this vocabulary.

Visit the **UNB Libraries' Research Toolkit** to learn basic search strategies and review the benefits of creating accounts in databases.

1. Go to D2L Brightspace in the UNB portal or https://lms.unb.ca

2. Under Free Course Registration, locate **Libraries' Research Toolkit**.

3. Self-Register by selecting the toolkit and choosing "register."

Intro to Databases

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Building Blocks for Database Searching

Keywords	Words and phrases that describe your topic. Key terms that you have gleaned from **reference sources** and **books** on your topic, during preliminary research. Use **double quotation marks** around multiple words (" ") to search for exact phrases.
Synonyms	A word or phrase similar to, or meaning almost the same thing as, a given word or phrase. **Synonyms** help you generate more accurate search results for your topic.
Subject Headings and Controlled Vocabulary	A set of words or phrases used by a database to categorize its content. **Controlled vocabulary** or **subject headings** help you retrieve more precise search results by tapping into the preferred language used by a database. Search for **controlled vocabulary** under the "Thesaurus" or "Index" links on the main navigation ribbon of many databases.
Limiters	Search settings within a database that allow you to refine your search by format, author, year, language, type of content, and topic. Some databases will also have a "peer reviewed" option among their limiters.
Boolean Operators: AND, OR, NOT	**AND** — The red areas represent the search results, or "hits." Use **AND** to link concepts and narrow your results.
	OR — Use **OR** to search widely for synonyms and expand your search results.
	NOT — Use **NOT** to exclude terms from your search. For instance, *fruits* **NOT** *oranges*.
Truncation	A search strategy to find different endings of a root word. In some databases, the **asterisk *** can replace an unspecified number of characters. For instance, the search term "child*" will find child, child's, children, children's, and childhood.
Wildcard Symbols	Symbols that allow you to search for terms that may have variant spellings. Different databases use different symbols for wildcard characters, including **?**, **#**, **$**, and *****. For instance, the search term "wom?n" will find women and woman. Most databases offer a "Help" section to inform users of the wildcard characters used in that particular database.
Stop Words	Stop words are common words, such as **in**, **the**, **about**, or **a** that can inflate your search results and are sometimes ignored entirely in database searches. Exclude them from your search or deliberately keep them in by putting double quotation marks (" ") around your phrase.
Proximity Operators	Use **NEAR** to look for words that are close to each other or have specified distance between each other. For instance, in the databases published by EBSCO, you can search "education **near** female" to find instances of these words close to each other. Searching "education **near.6** female" will retrieve instances where "education" and "female" are within 6 words of each other.

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