Super search strategies

Try these quick tips to improve your search and get exactly the information you need!

Too many results?

TIP 1: Use AND functionality

Add more (relevant) keywords. On journals databases, use the AND functionality:

When you reduce the number of results, should find that you can quickly scan through the titles and abstracts to see which ones are most relevant.

TIP 2: Narrower keywords

Think about how you can make your keywords more specific.

For example: Taiwan instead of Asia? Vitamins instead of nutrition?

TIP 3: Phrase searching

Use quotation marks to search for a whole phrase e.g.

"European Union"

"organic food"

"Islamic art"

TIP 4: Restricted fields search

In most journals databases you can tell the database to look for your keywords only in the most important places, e.g. in the article title or in the abstract.

TIP 5: Filter your results

On your search results screen, you'll often see a wide range of filters to refine your search. For example, you can use tickboxes or sliders to restrict your search:

- By date
- By format (e.g. reports, analysis, news)
- By subject or theme
- By industry sectors and demographics
- By country or geographic region
- Journals - by academic/ non-academic type

TIP 6: Use NOT functionality

This is used to exclude something specific that you don't want to appear in the results. Use this one carefully! You want to avoid screening out potentially relevant results. Use it when:

1. A term is used in different ways that are irrelevant to your topic

e.g. coaching NOT sport

2. You want to exclude something that has received a lot of coverage that may be related but not relevant to your query

e.g. Ryanair sales NOT strike
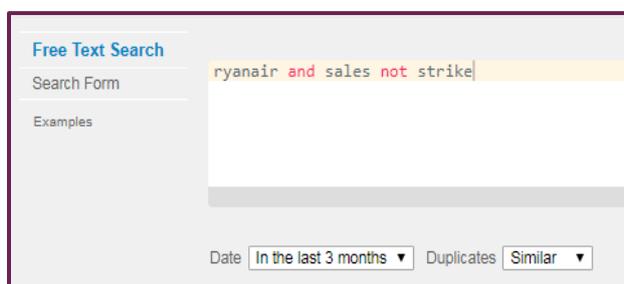
Not enough results?

TIP 1: Use fewer keywords

Start searching for more general topic information or a wider geographic area.

TIP 2: Use broader keywords

Social media instead of Instagram? China instead of Beijing?

TIP 3: Use OR functionality

Try using OR between similar search terms:
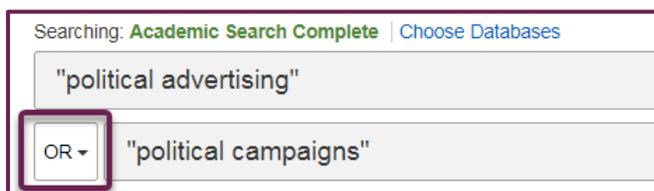
TIP 4: Wildcard symbols
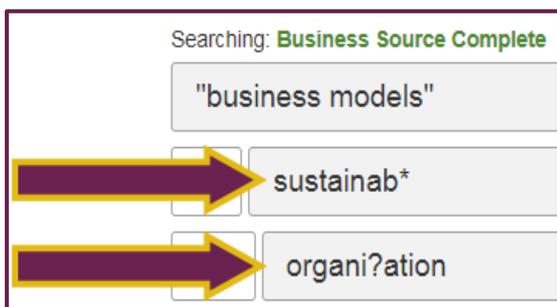
Use these to include different spellings or words that begin the same way e.g. sustainable and sustainability.

On many databases, you can use * to replace a word ending.

You can usually use ? to replace a letter in the middle of a word, for example to account for both US and UK spellings (some databases will do this automatically).

TIP 5: Remove filters

Remove or broaden any existing filters.

For example, try looking further back in time, or include different types of publications.

TIP 6: Citation searching

Found a useful article? Use it to look for related articles.

First, look in the bibliography of the article to find items that this article was based on. But remember, this only looks *backwards* from the date of the article.

Citing articles (2)

The multifractal properties of Euro and Pound exc...
2018, Physica A: Statistical Mechanics and its Applicat...
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Beyond Brexit's uncertainty: the foreseeable Britai...
2018, Journal of Economic Studies
View details ⌄

It's a bit different on each database, but you might see a button or link that says 'cited by', 'citations', 'citing articles' or 'times cited in this database'.

This should give you a list of related articles which cite this article - looking *forwards* from the date of the article and so helping to bring your research up to date.

TIP 7: Try a different database

It might just be that you are not in the best place to find the particular kind of information you're looking for.

Try your subject help page or ask your Academic Liaison Librarian for help finding the best databases for your topic.

HAPPY SEARCHING!