

Database search tips for Sociology

1. Planning your search

This [Search Plan for Sociology](#) (Google doc) can help you develop a list of keywords to use when searching online. Click on File - Make a copy - to save your own copy and then add your own notes to it.

2. How do I search a database?

[Browse a list of key databases for Sociology students here](#)

Searching with AND

Databases work in a different way to Google and the LibrarySearch. You'll often see on databases that they have several search boxes linked by **AND**.

You need to type separate keywords or phrases into each search box, for example:

ethnicity AND employment

attainment AND education

This will find references containing both terms.

Add in additional keywords to focus your search – each new word/phrase will narrow down your search

e.g. ethnicity AND employment AND recruitment

attainment AND education AND social class

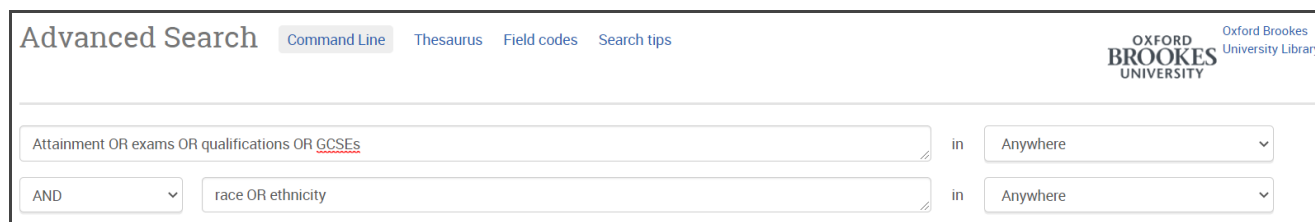
Experiment with alternative terms - you may find more results.

Example search on Sociological Abstracts database:

The screenshot shows the ProQuest Sociological Abstracts database search interface. At the top, it says 'ProQuest' and 'Access provided by OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY'. Below that, it says 'Sociological Abstracts' and 'Basic Search | Advanced Search | Change databases'. The main search area is titled 'Advanced Search' and has tabs for 'Command Line', 'Thesaurus', 'Field codes', and 'Search tips'. There are two search boxes: the first contains 'attainment' and the second contains 'education'. Both boxes are set to search 'Anywhere'. There is a dropdown menu for 'AND' between the boxes. Below the search boxes, there is a '+ Add a row' button. At the bottom left, there is a 'Limit to: Peer reviewed' checkbox and a 'Publication date: All dates' dropdown menu. At the bottom right, there is a 'Search' button and a 'Clear form' link.

Searching with OR

You can use **OR** to search for alternative terms and broaden your search, e.g.
employment OR work OR career
attainment OR qualifications OR GCSEs
teenagers OR young people OR young adults OR children.



Advanced Search [Command Line](#) [Thesaurus](#) [Field codes](#) [Search tips](#) **OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY** Oxford Brookes University Library

Attainment OR exams OR qualifications OR GCSEs in Anywhere

AND race OR ethnicity in Anywhere

Phrase searching

Put phrases in quotation marks if you want to make sure the words are only found together (and not separately), e.g. “mixed methods”; “social class”; “widening participation”.

Wildcard symbols

- Use the truncation symbol * added to the root of a word to search for alternative endings, e.g. employ* will find employ, employment, employer, employee etc.; ethnic* will find ethnic and ethnicity
- Use the ? symbol to replace a character in a word e.g. sociali?ation will find socialization and socialisation.



"educational attainment" in Anywhere

AND race OR racism OR ethnic* in Anywhere

Sorting and refining your results

Databases such as Sociological Abstracts and IBSS allow you to sort results by date or relevance. You will probably find that sorting results by relevance is more helpful.

Look for options to focus your search. These can include:

- Limiting your search to material published in English.
- Narrowing your results by date.
- Focusing on scholarly peer-reviewed articles.

3. Further help

- If you would like further help, please contact the Academic Liaison Librarian for Sociology, Joanna Cooksey by emailing jcooksey@brookes.ac.uk
- Check the **Course resource help for Sociology** at: <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/resources-and-services/course-resource-help/sociology> for links to key-e-resources, guides and much more.

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