



VIEW TEACHING GUIDES

6. SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

If your students are just becoming familiar with searching for sources, particularly when using an academic database or catalog, use the following items that focus on database choice and keyword searches:

- The Searching Mindset
- Exploration Strategies
- Identifying Search Strategies
- Choosing a Database
- Refining Search Results

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Date Published

When searching for sources, why is the date feature important? What does it do? Are there subjects or instances when students need to limit to recent material? Older material? Specific decade?

Search Strategies

Most students are familiar with search engines such as Google, but it's important they move beyond using a single search tool. This discussion will help students identify familiar research tools and additional resources to use in their search process. Begin by asking students to describe how they access information for school, work, or entertainment. Next, have your students select a search tool they are familiar with, such as Google or an online encyclopedia, and discuss its strengths and weaknesses. Use the following prompts to encourage student analysis of their chosen search tool:

- How easy is it to find and share information using this tool?
- How quickly can you get relevant results?
- Are there certain types of information this tool locates better than others?
- Is there an advanced search option? Describe a situation in which you would use advanced search.

Use this discussion to segue into using academic search tools as an additional resource to those identified by your students. Encourage students to use multiple search tools based on their information need and the stage of the research process.

ACTIVITIES

Databases

Have students identify two or more databases or related tools. Students should write out their thesis, keywords, and synonyms. Direct students to search in a library database, catalog, or discovery tool and share observations. Compare this to search engines like Google. Have students explore similarities and differences in these tools.

Ask students to search for the same topic/subject in two databases. How did searching in each database work? Differences? Similarities? Search results? Numbers? Relevance? Was one a subject-specific database? Does that make a difference in search results? Have students present or write up a short report on their findings.

Thesis Statements and Keywords

Create a set of imaginary thesis statements. Have students pick out keywords, develop a list of synonyms and related terms, and select a few databases appropriate for the topic. They should provide reasoning behind their selections.

Tell students to search various keywords and synonyms in a library database and in Google. What did they discover about the importance of synonyms and multiple keywords in the databases? How about spelling in databases vs. Google?

Have students work in pairs that swap thesis statements. Students should create a list of keywords and synonyms for their partners, select a few appropriate databases or other resources, and locate at least one source for their partner's project. Have the student utilize the Send/Share function in a search tool to send their partner a link or copy of the source.

Keywords

Locating the most relevant results relies on using the right combination of keywords. For this activity, divide students up into small groups. Assign each group a high level topic and a subtopic; for example: *artificial intelligence* and *self-driving cars*. Students then will brainstorm a list of keywords for both the topic and subtopic.

Using a database or Google Scholar, students will run a keyword search to locate at least 3 sources on their high-level topic and at least 2 sources on their subtopic to share with the class. Encourage students to revise their keyword lists based on their research findings (replacing *self-driving cars* with *autonomous vehicles*, for example). Students should be able to report on the accuracy of their initial keyword list and any changes made during the search process.