5. Basic vs Advanced Searching

Learn to use advanced search tools to build a search strategy. Practice adjusting and refining a search to retrieve more relevant results.

Basic Searching

Usually when you open MultiSearch, a search engine or one of the library's databases, you will be directed to a Basic Search screen. Here you are able to simply type words and phrases into the search box to find books, ebooks, articles, videos and more. You can also use Boolean operators, wildcards, truncation and phrase searching to help refine your search.

The Entering Keywords page in this series of tutorials provides you with a more detailed look at basic searching. You can also watch the videos below:

- How to borrow library items
- How to find eresources online

Advanced Searching

1. The Search Boxes

The search boxes allow you to construct a more focused search and adjust it more easily.

Use one box for each of the main topic areas you are looking for. In this example, I am looking for the topics: Grief and relationships and interventions. Therefore, I will use three boxes, one for each topic and include synonyms for each topic in that box. If you want to include more topics in your search, most databases will allow you to add additional boxes.

```
grief OR loss OR bereavement OR mourning
AND relationship OR spouse OR marriage OR partner
AND intervention OR treatment OR therapy
```
2. Boolean Operators, Wildcards, Truncation and Phrases

Between each search box you are able to choose the appropriate Boolean operator to connect your search terms. For this search, I will leave this option as the AND operator and use OR operators in the search boxes between synonyms.

You can also refine your search string at this stage by adding wildcards, truncation and phrases. For example, in this search I could truncate bereavement and counselling and therapy.

![Search Example]

3. Refine with Select Field Options

You are able to use the ‘Select a field’ drop down menus to tell the database where to look for search terms. You might have to adjust these fields if you’ve limited the search too much. You might also try mixing and matching across the search boxes as some fields will work better with different keywords. Below is a brief definition of some of the common fields you can choose from:

- **Select a Field or Any Field** - Will look through all sections of item records for your keywords. This will deliver a larger, more comprehensive set of results.
- **All Text** - Will look through the entire full-text of the items. This will deliver the largest set of results but they may not always be the most relevant.
- **Author** - Use when you want to search for a particular author or theorist. Begin by just using the author's surname.
- **Title** - Will just search through the titles of the items in the database. This will give you a much smaller and relevant set of results.
- **Subject terms** - Will look through the subject tags attached to each record. Again, this will give you a smaller more relevant list of results.
Abstract - When looking for journal articles, limiting to an abstract search will often give you a relevant, yet comprehensive search. The abstract is the summary you find at the beginning of a research article.

4. The Refine Results Menu

After you hit the search button and retrieve your results list, you will also see a Refine Results menu, usually down the left or right hand side of the page. This menu allows you to use the built in facets of the database to easily refine the results and deliver a more relevant list. A few ways of limiting the search include:

- Peer Review: If you are unsure about assessing scholarly material, you can limit the results to just peer reviewed studies.
- Date: You may also just want to look at recent research and publications. To do this, limit by date from the Publication Date field.
- Facets: And you can make use of the limiting facets produced by the database. These are based on the metadata from your results list. Subject or Thesaurus terms are often a good place to start in order to make your results a little more relevant but there is often a variety of other options to choose from such as gender, age, geography, publication type and so on.
Tutorial Checklist

- I am able to find and use advanced search boxes.
- I know how to create an advanced search string.
- I can use the select field options to refine a search.
- I am aware of the built-in refine results menus.

Ask a librarian