The

epic

explorer's tips

epic search tips: general rules

Connectors (operators)

Many databases require you to use **'AND'** between your search terms if you want all included in each item **eg. suv AND safety.** If you don't, they may assume it is a phrase search. An uppercase AND works consistently in all databases.

Phrases/Names

Denote a phrase (name, specific order of words…) using double quotes eg. **"british isles"**. They will
either require or ignore these quotes. Some e-resources provide specific 'button' options to enter a name or title.

Providing for Alternatives

Use an **'OR'** between either/or options for the same concept, wrapping them in parentheses eg. **suv OR 4wd**. An asterisk (*) allows you to search on the stem of words **eg. diet*** covers also **diets, dietary.**

Common Words

Avoid common words like '**and, or, with, an, the, for, how…**' as these are not usually searchable unless enclosed within a phrase.

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epic search tips: general strategies

Go Fishing
'Fish' for a relevant article through a keyword search, note the associated **subject headings** and rerun a basic search using these headings.

Get it Sorted
Many databases default to date order of displayed results. A Google-like **relevance** ranking is often more useful to evaluate searches - look for a **'sort by'** button.

Plan 'B'
Get analytical - use topic analysis to systematically try **variant keyword** terms on **one concept** while you keep the other(s) constant. Try concepts broader in scope only if all likely alternatives fail.

Take it to the Limit(er)s
If an initial search has a bit of useful stuff but a lot of irrelevant, try sharpening it through limiting options such as:
- '**tabs**' (at the top) or **'facets'** (to the side) of the search results to select the **type of material** that best matches your needs - reference, scholarly, subject terms...
- date or time **period** drop down **menus** or **buttons**.

Act Local
Look at the search screen options - are there specific database features or limits offered? If so, do they provide a more precise or easier way of searching that better meets your needs than the basic search option?

And if all else fails...
Click on the '**Help**' or **'Search Tips'** link (there always is one!)

epic bookmarking tips

1. Once you have created a bookmark you will need to do the following to access it:
   - Log into EPIC on the PC or device that you want to access the bookmarked link from
   - Click on the link to the resource you want to access and leave it open
   - Click on your bookmark

2. If you can't find a bookmarking tool in the database you are searching—cut & paste the URL from the browser

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