Section:
Searching for Information

Lesson:
Search Techniques

Learning Objectives:
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
  • Effectively use database search techniques for index and
    full-text searching, including the use of logical operators, truncation, 
    wildcard, and proximity searches
  • Sort and filter to find the most relevant search results
  • Save or export search results

Components:

• Video - Refining Search Results
• Quiz - Search Techniques

Introduction (real world relevance):
It’s not enough to know where to search; you have to know how to search effectively to find the BEST results to match your need. In school, this can mean finding a relevant source for your paper. Outside of school, knowing how to search for information can help you find information pertaining to everything from recipes to qualified medical practitioners.

Discussion Topics:
Have students 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.

Within a database, have students work in pairs to explore Boolean operators, search strings, limiters, etc. Have them make use of any Help features available. What helps, what seems too complicated to be useful, when might they use certain features, etc?
Activities:

Pick a topic and have students organize themselves into groups using Boolean operators (for example: students who are freshman AND biology majors, students who live in the dorms OR are seniors, students who like english but are NOT english majors). Then once the students are broken into groups have them pick a topic to search. Once they have their topic students will work together to choose a database, search for articles on their topic, refine their results using specific parameters (for example: only articles from the last five years, only peer-reviewed articles, etc…), then students will use the thesaurus to look for different ways of wording their original keyword search. They will then search with their new keywords using the same limiters as before to their search results, and then compare the results from the two different searches.