

Keys to Finding What You Need in Neumann Library Research Databases

<http://www.uhcl.edu/library>

Preliminary Steps

1. What question are you trying to answer? Write down or state your topic in your own words, and then identify the keywords that represent the most important concepts.

Sample topic question: What if any effect does **smoking** in **movies** have on **teenagers** and their decisions about whether or not to smoke?

2. Think of synonyms, variations, or short phrases for your keywords, and construct a search statement using standard Boolean or logical operators (especially **and**, **or**) and wildcard symbols (most databases use the asterisk to truncate a search term, e.g., *teen** retrieves *teen*, *teens*, *teenager*, *teenagers*, etc.).

Concept		Concept		Concept
smoking or cigarette*	and	movie* or film* or cinema	and	teen* or adolescen*

Begin Your Search

3. Click **Research a Topic** on the library homepage, and then select either **Databases A-Z** or an appropriate academic subject link. Choose a database that includes coverage for your subject area and for the type of publication(s) you seek. Most library databases include indexing and selected full text for journal articles, but some specialize in books, conference papers, dissertations, or other publications. Find information about the content of a particular database through the **Info** and/or **Guide** links on the library website, or consult a Reference Librarian.

4. In your chosen database, look for a search screen that offers multiple text entry boxes. This usually will be the default search screen, but if not, look for wording like *Guided Search* or *Advanced Search*, and enter your search statement.

Enter the term or terms for each concept into a separate text entry box. Type logical operators directly, or select needed operators from pull-down menus.

Find: in ?

in

in [Add Row](#)

in: ?

Limit your results:

Full Text	<input type="checkbox"/>
References Available	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Published Date from	<input type="text" value="Month"/> Year: <input type="text" value=""/> to <input type="text" value="Month"/> Year: <input type="text" value=""/>

Most databases offer a variety of limiters, which you can use to narrow the focus of your search results. To find scholarly articles more quickly, add the limiter for peer-reviewed journals (if provided). Adding a limiter for references (a bibliography) may help, also.

Review Your Initial Results

5. Critically examine the relevant records found for possible ways to improve your search.

◀ 2 of 7 ▶ [Result List](#) | [Refine Search](#) | [Print](#) | [E-mail](#) | [Save](#) | [Add to folder](#) Folder is empty

Formats: [Citation](#) | [PDF Full Text](#) (1.2MB) | [HTML Full Text](#) | [References \(35\)](#)

Title: Do Favorite *Movie* Stars Influence *Adolescent Smoking* Initiation?

Authors: [Distefan, Janet M.](#)¹
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[Gilpin, Elizabeth A.](#)¹

Source: [American Journal of Public Health](#); Jul2004, Vol. 94 Issue 7, p1239, 6p, 3 charts, 1 graph

Document Type: Article

Subject Terms: [*SMOKING](#)
[*TEENAGERS](#)
[*MOTION pictures & teenagers](#)
[*MOTION pictures](#)
[*TOBACCO habit](#)
[*ADVERTISING -- Tobacco Social aspects](#)

If the database uses official subject terms or descriptors to describe content, your search results usually will be more focused if your keywords match. The sample search included the keywords *smoking* and *teen**, but not *motion pictures*. Look in titles, abstracts, and possibly full text for other good keywords you might want to try, especially if official subject terms don't seem to help.

NAICS/Industry Codes: [512](#) Motion Picture and Sound Recording
[5418](#) Advertising and Related Services

Abstract: Objectives. We sought to determine whether *adolescents* whose favorite *movie* stars smoke on-screen are at increased risk of

Revise or Refine Your Search as Needed

6. Are you finding **too many** records? Narrow your search with one or more of these suggestions.

- Using the logical operator **and**, add additional, relevant keywords or subject terms to your search statement. If you need more text entry boxes, look for a link that lets you *add a row*, or use parentheses to “nest” your search terms: (smoking or cigarette*) and prevent*.
- Use drop-down menus to restrict some or all of your keywords to specific fields (subject terms, title, etc.).
- Add relevant limiters (date range, publication type, peer-reviewed journals, etc.). Databases that specialize in a particular subject area (for example: America History and Life, Business Source Complete, PsycINFO, etc.) usually have additional limiters that are relevant to that discipline. Take the time to explore the search screen.
- Consider using the logical operator **not** to remove specified keywords or terms from your results, or consider using proximity operators (**near**, **wn**, etc.), which produce narrower results than the logical operator **and**. For more information on these options, see onscreen help, individual database guides, or consult a Reference Librarian.

7. Are you finding **too few** records? Check first for typographical errors, and then broaden your search with one or more of these suggestions.

- Using the logical operator **or**, add additional, relevant synonyms or alternative keywords or official subject terms that you did not use in your original search. In some databases you can use a Thesaurus or Subject feature to help identify appropriate search terms and an *explode* feature to search a subject term and all of its narrower terms at once.
- Truncate or stem your search terms by using wildcard operators. In addition to the commonly used asterisk, many databases offer additional wildcards.
- If available, search for all or some of your search terms in *full text* or *all text* fields.
- Simplify your search by removing less critical terms or concepts.
- Remove completely or expand the range of selected limiters.
- Try your search in a different database.

8. Don't get frustrated! If you aren't finding what you need, consult a Reference Librarian.