

USING SEARCH WORDS EFFECTIVELY

When you're searching, good search words give you much better results. In this video we'll show some tips for finding good search words, and on using them effectively to improve your results.

Before you search, break down your topic into its main concepts. For example, if we are trying to find out what influences nannies' decisions to immigrate to Canada, the main concepts are nannies, immigration, and Canada. You need to include all these concepts in your search, or your results won't be relevant.

Next, try to think of other words that could be used to talk about those concepts. I had trouble coming up with another word for nanny. But I thought of immigrants for immigration, and Canadian for Canada. We'll use these alternate terms in our search.

Let's search in a Proquest database to see how it works. In the first search box I'll type in nannies. In the second row, I'll type in my next concept, immigration OR immigrants. The OR says I'm fine with getting results that have either one of these words. I have 3 concepts, so I need to click Add a row. Then I type Canada OR Canadians in the search box on the third row. You'll see that each of my main concepts is on a separate row, separated by AND. The alternate words for each concept are on the same row, separated by OR.

I get 8 results, which isn't very many. When this happens, look at your results for clues about other alternate search words you might have missed. You can use these to revise your search. Look through the titles and descriptions of articles in your results. You can also look at the subjects. To find these, look in the left menu and click on the down arrow beside Subject. You'll see a few of the subjects here, but to see more of them click on More. In the subject window you can scroll through for ideas on search words. Doing this I found that another term for nannies is domestic workers or domestics, and another term for immigration is migration.

Now I can modify my search to include these new terms. This time I'll type nannies OR domestics in the first row, then immigration OR migration in the second row, and Canada OR Canadian in the third row. I get more than 300 results, which is a lot better.

As you can see, your search results depend a lot on how good your search words are, and how you search with them.

The Library's other databases look slightly different, but work the same way. This includes the Advanced Search feature in the Omni library catalogue, and the Ebscohost databases.

If you have any questions, ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus.