Database Search Tips

I.   Starting out
- Break your topic into a few key concepts. Databases only want key concepts.
- Try synonyms for your concepts because various words may be used to describe your topic.

II.   Databases: Find citations for journal articles by keyword searching
- From the library homepage, choose the **Articles** tab, **Articles by Subject**, then a relevant discipline. One database may have more on your topic than another.

- Start with a simple keyword search. Fewer keywords increases hits, while more keywords decrease hits but refines them. Evaluate whether you are getting a manageable number of relevant results and change your search accordingly. Here are several tips to refine your results list.

  - Use quotation marks around a multi-word search term to limit results to the words together as a phrase: **"affective disorder"**.

  - **And** between search terms narrows the search because it forces both terms to be included in each result. **Or** is the opposite. "Or" between search terms broadens results because either term may appear in each result. **Or** is used for synonyms or near synonyms, such as **addiction or dependency** to be more thorough.

  - Use the limiters, such as date range, peer reviewed, etc., to reduce and refine hits.

  - If you want to broaden your hits to include all possible endings of a search term, use the root word plus an asterisk. **Comput*** will bring back records with the word computer, computers, computing, computation, computational, etc.

  - Too few hits? Think of different keywords, more general keywords, or synonyms for your concept. Or try a different database.

  - If you find a good record, look at the subject descriptors listed in the record for better search terms.

III.   Where's the full text?
- Some databases have only the citation for the article. Others have the full text included. Look for an icon for **pdf** or **html** full text.

- If full text is not in the database, try the red *FIND IT* button. *Find It* will look for your article in all the other databases, as well as the catalog for subscriptions (in which case, check to see if we have the year you want). If *Find It* locates your article, click through the links until you find the pdf for it. If it cannot find your article, it will indicate inter library loan. Ordering from interlibrary loan takes about 4-5 days. Ask a librarian to help you with all this.