

# STEP BY STEP SEARCHING

## 1 CHOOSE RESEARCH TOPIC AND IDENTIFY MAIN CONCEPTS

Write your research topic as a statement or question, then identify the **most important words or phrases** in your topic. These will usually be nouns, such as people or groups, places, time periods or eras, or issues.

**Example research topic:** Is there a relationship between video games and aggression in adolescents?

**Main concepts:** video games, aggression, adolescents

## BRAINSTORM SEARCH TERMS

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Generate a list of **synonyms or related terms** that can be used to refer to the main concepts in your topic. Consider alternate spellings, pluralization, different word forms, and broader or narrower terms. These will be your search terms.

### Search terms:

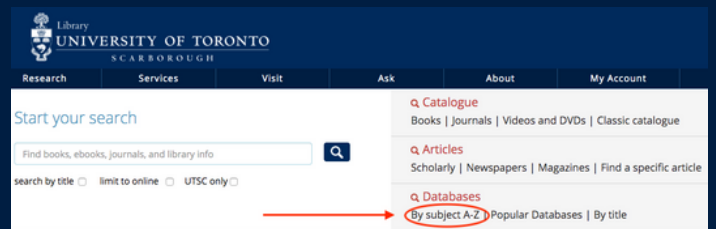
*Video games:* electronic game(s), computer(ized) game(s), Xbox, Playstation, Nintendo, gaming

*Aggression:* aggressive, aggressiveness, hostile, hostility, violence, violent, attack(s)

*Adolescents:* adolescence, teen(s), teenager(s), youth, young

## 3 SELECT A DATABASE

Library databases allow you to search for journal articles and other scholarly research. Use the **Subjects A-Z tool** on the library website to select an appropriate library database. From the drop-down menu, select the subject area that is most relevant for your topic.



**Subject area:** psychology **Database:** PsycINFO

**AND:** results must contain both/all of the search terms

*Example:* aggression AND video game AND adolescent  
Used to combine main concepts and make results more specific.

**OR:** results must contain either/any of the search terms

*Example:* PlayStation OR Xbox OR Nintendo  
Used to combine synonyms/related terms and broaden results.

**NOT:** results cannot contain the search term(s)

*Example:* video game NOT computer game

**Quotation marks:** results must match an exact phrase

(combination of words in a specific order)

*Example:* "video game"

**Asterisk (\* symbol):** results will contain terms that begin with a specific root

*Example:* aggressi\* (will search for aggressive, aggressiveness, aggression)

## ENTER AND COMBINE SEARCH TERMS

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Enter the search terms for each main concept in their **own distinct lines** in the search interface. Combine your search terms using **Boolean operators and modifiers** to narrow or expand your search results.

## 5 APPLY LIMITS AND REVIEW RESULTS

Use the **limiters** on the advanced search page or search results page to refine your results. Most databases allow you to limit your results to **peer-reviewed** articles only, or to filter results by date of publication, language, or subject. Review the results to ensure they're relevant to your topic.

