

## CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SEARCHES

### Searching "Smarter"

- Select databases that index information sources covering the field in which you are doing research
- Enclose phrases in quotations  
*Example: "classroom management"*
- Use **AND** to narrow your topic/search  
*Examples: "genetic engineering" and ethics  
women and poverty*
- Use **OR** to broaden your topic/search  
*Examples: teenagers or adolescents or youth  
refugee or immigrant*  
*NOTE: Synonyms and related concepts work well here*
- Use **Wildcards** or **Truncation** to retrieve different forms of words  
*Examples: ethic\* = ethic, ethics, ethical, ethically  
teen\* = teen, teens, teenager, teenagers  
wom\*n = woman, women*
- Combine the above-listed strategies  
*Examples: organization and change and (implement\* or manag\*)  
"classroom management" and (teen\* or adolescen\*)*
- Use **Official Terms, Subject Headings, Subject Terms, or Descriptors** when possible  
If unknown:
  1. Do a **keyword** search
  2. Find an item that seems to be on target
  3. Check to see how it is classified
  4. Look at the **subject headings/terms or descriptors** used to describe the title
- Use a **Thesaurus** or **Subject Index** (if it is available) to find official terminology, related terms, and cross references to other possibilities
- Limit your search by publication date, periodical title, etc. if those categories will make your search more effective
- Review the database **HELP** pages for search tips

### Retrieving Scholarly Materials

- If available, use the database's limiting feature of, for example:  
"refereed", "peer reviewed", or "scholarly"
- If the database has a subject index or subdivisions of a main subject, look for the subject "research" or "studies" or for a "research" subdivision
- Add the words "research", "study" or "studies", "survey\*", "empirical", "qualitative research", or "quantitative research" to a keyword search
- Try a **Specialized Database** (by Discipline or Subject)  
*Examples: ERIC (Education) Social Services Abstracts  
ATLA Religion Database Biology Digest*