


Principles for Online Database Searching

1. You ARE an Advanced searcher.
2. Spend a few minutes looking at the search screen. Look at all your choices & options.
3. Think in terms of one IDEA per line in the standard 3-search box grid. You don't have to have 3 though. Two will get you more than 3.
4. Individual words are more powerful than phrases. Don't use a phrase when a word will do, as in *media vs mass media*.
5. Most databases assume *American* or *United States*, so using those words really makes a mess of your search results.
6. If at first you don't succeed, and get nothing, simplify your search (see 3, 4, 5 above).
7. If at first you don't succeed, and get way too much, search in the SUBJECT (*sometimes called* DESCRIPTOR) field, and go back to 2 (above).
8. YOUR language may not be the database's language, and YOU need to change yours (see 9).
9.  The really is in the details, the details of the complete RECORD in the database, especially the words & phrases in the Subject/Descriptor field!
10. Punctuation can be risky. Some databases, but not many, require you to put quotation marks (or do something even stranger) to designate a phrase, but most punctuation is either ignored or means something, but not necessarily what you think it means!
11. If you have tried several different searches for your topic in one database, maybe you need to try a different database.
12. Never, ever, ever use the browser navigation keys (like BACK) or File-Print function when you are INSIDE a database. Use the database's own function keys and buttons.
13. Be prepared to read at least 100 abstracts. This IS the information age!
14. Don't be afraid to use PRINT journals. The ARS works will get it for you.