

RULES OF THUMB FOR LIBRARY RESEARCH



Use the right tool to find the information you need.

Library catalog

- Lists books and journals – not articles
- Lists only items owned by NMSU – not everything in the world
- Can be accessed by anyone on the Web at <http://libcat.nmsu.edu/>

Article databases

- List articles on a topic
- Each database differs in the subjects, dates, & types of publications it covers
- Provide the full-text of some articles, but just references to other articles
 - If you don't find what you need in one database, try another!***
- Lists articles from various publications, not all of which are owned by NMSU
- Can only be accessed by NMSU students, faculty, and staff on the Web at <http://lib.nmsu.edu/article.html>



Don't rely on Web search engines for all your information.

- Web search engines – such as Google (<http://www.google.com>), Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>), and Alta Vista (<http://www.altavista.com>) - can give good information on many topics.
- But Web pages are not substitutes for books and articles.
 - * They do not give as much information on a topic as books.
 - * They are not reviewed or edited by someone other than the author before publication.
 - * They often do not list either their author(s) or their date of publication – making it hard to evaluate the information they provide.
 - * They also generally do not cite their sources, making it impossible for you to examine the information used in the creation of the page and check the page for accuracy.



Try different keywords in researching your topic.

Most topics can be expressed in different ways. Someone researching the legality of euthanasia could search for:

- euthanasia
- physician-assisted suicide
- mercy killing
- laws AND euthanasia
- legality AND euthanasia
- and in other ways

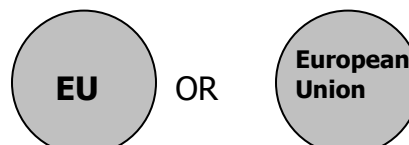
A keyword search will find **ONLY** information resources using exactly the words you typed in to the computer. It will not find information using other words for the same topic.

If you aren't finding any sources, try your search again with different keywords!



Broaden your search when you find too few items.

- Switch from subject to keyword searching***
- Search a broader term: partial birth abortions \Rightarrow abortions
- Use OR to broaden your search

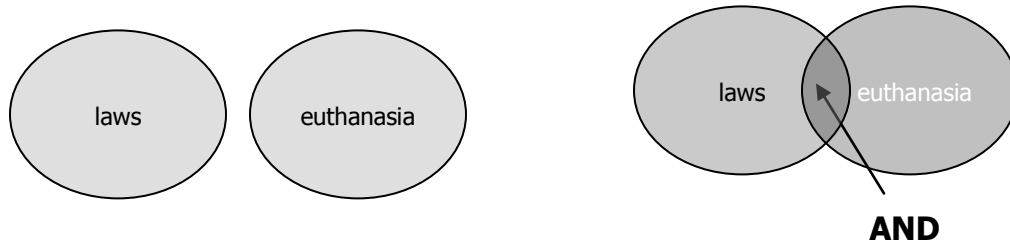




Narrow your search when you find too many items.

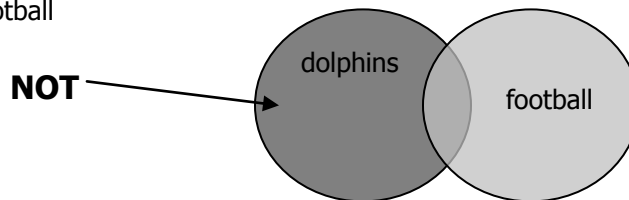
AND narrows your results by finding information resources that use all of the search terms connected by AND.

- ❑ Searching "laws" would find traffic laws, employment laws, immigration laws, and more.
- ❑ Searching for "euthanasia" would find information about methods of euthanasia, the morality of it, and more.
- ❑ laws AND euthanasia, though, finds only those laws having to do with euthanasia, and only those aspects of euthanasia having to do with its legality.



NOT excludes from your results all resources that use one word or phrase in conjunction with another.

- ❑ dolphins NOT football would find all resources that talk about dolphins without mentioning football



Limit your search to results from a particular date, from particular type of publication (peer reviewed, book review, etc.), from a specific publication, etc.

Switch from a keyword to a subject search.



Begin researching with enough time to obtain needed items.

Not everything is full-text on the computer!

With books:

1. Locate the book title in the catalog (<http://libcat.nmsu.edu>)
2. Jot down the call number and the library building.
3. Pull it from the shelves on the appropriate floor.
4. Check it out at the circulation desk.
5. If the book is not in the catalog, order it through Interlibrary Loan (<http://illiad.nmsu.edu/illiad.html?>).

With print articles:

1. Locate the journal title in the catalog (<http://libcat.nmsu.edu>).
2. Jot down the call number, library building and floor.
3. Recent issues are normally found in the Current Periodicals Reading Room.
4. Older issues are bound and moved upstairs.
5. Locate the article within the correct year/issue of the journal and photocopy it.
6. If the journal title is not in the catalog, order the article through Interlibrary Loan (<http://illiad.nmsu.edu/illiad.html?>).



Evaluate the resources you find; not every source you find is worth using.