How to Search:

Using “Discovery” Databases, e.g.,

EMU Esearch
Google Scholar
Since information search involves querying written, text records documenting the communications of others, it makes sense that the key to discovering material relevant to your topic is your ability to use appropriate VOCABULARY – words and phrases – to search the communication streams.
• Another way to frame this is that when you are doing RESEARCH you are joining a CONVERSATION among other researchers who share your concerns about the issues and problems that engage you.

• To participate in any ongoing conversation you will need to understand the LANGUAGE – words and concepts – being used by the discussants.
The records in the communication stream of “discovery” databases, such as EMU’s Esearch or Google Scholar, contain descriptions of each item in the database, e.g., author(s), title, publisher, publication date, content summary, and sometimes, in addition, the full text of the item.
• In “discovery” databases, to find items relevant to your topic, you search the words and phrases used by the authors/publication sources.

• Authors/publication sources discussing the same topic might use different words and phrases to describe it (due to the richness and complexity of language).
For example, if your topic is:

“Does being overweight impact academic performance?”

Different authors might use any of the following synonyms to describe and discuss the two topical themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1 Synonyms</th>
<th>Concept 2 Synonyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>overweight</td>
<td>academic performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obesity</td>
<td>academic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scholastic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>educational achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Search Tip:

– It is not effective to type a complete search statement sentence into a database search box

– Identify the main thematic concepts from your sentence and type those words/phrases only

• The bolded words/phrases below are the main thematic concepts:
  “Does being **overweight** impact **academic performance**?”
What strategy should you use to maximize your success finding relevant material when searching “discovery” databases such as EMU’s Esearch or Google Scholar?
First, Generate Search Topic Synonyms

• If your search topic is:
  ‘Does poverty impact language development in early childhood?’

List as many words and phrases you can think of to describe EACH thematic concept of your search topic

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td>language development</td>
<td>early childhood education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low income</td>
<td>language acquisition</td>
<td>preschool education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economically disadvantaged</td>
<td>language fluency</td>
<td>preschool children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low socioeconomic status</td>
<td>language skills</td>
<td>nursery schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>child language</td>
<td>kindergarten</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discovery Database Searching
Advanced Search Screen

• If the “discovery” database offers an Advanced search screen, as found in most traditional academic databases, navigate to that screen and use that interface to search as you would in traditional academic databases.
Discovery Database Searching
Advanced Search Screen

• EMU’s discovery database, Esearch, offers an Advanced search screen similar to traditional academic databases

• Google Scholar does NOT offer such an Advanced search screen at this time
EMU Esearch Advanced Search Screen Tip

• When entering topical synonyms in each search box you MUST capitalize the OR connector that is used between synonyms
Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

• If you use the basic single search box interface in a “discovery” database, follow a different strategy to enter your search
Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

1. In the “discovery” database single search box, enter, at the same time, a single word or phrase for EACH of your thematic search concepts.

   In our example, you might start with:
   
   – poverty language development early childhood
Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

2. Review the search results

Keep alert for synonyms for your thematic search concepts that you did not initially think of
Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

3. If your result list includes sufficient material to meet your needs....Great!
If not...

4. Redo your search, but replace one of the thematic concept words or phrases, i.e., keywords, with another word or phrase from your synonym list
Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

For example, if your first search does not turn up sufficient material, you might next enter:

poverty language acquisition early childhood

Replacing your original phrase:

language development

With the next phrase on your synonym list:

language acquisition