CARDINAL STRITCH UNIVERSITY

Library

Create a search statement using keywords

Let's say your topic is: "How is the consumption of sugar in beverages contributing to rates of obesity in America?" To create a search statement using this topic sentence, begin by identifying the key terms in the sentence.

"How is the consumption of **sugar** in **beverages** contributing to rates of **obesity** in America?"

After the key terms have been singled out, brainstorm other words that might be used to describe the same or similar concepts. These other concepts can be broader or narrower in their scope. It can be helpful to create a list or a table of alternative search words.

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3
Sugar	Beverages	Obesity
Natural sweeteners	Fruit juice	Body weight
Artificial sweeteners	Diet soft drinks	Health

Building your search

Now that you have built a list of key terms, you're ready to start trying them out in the library catalog and databases. Most library catalogs and databases have an advanced search feature which makes it easy to combine terms. Figure 1 illustrates an advanced search in the Academic Search Complete database. Note that each term is placed in its own search box.
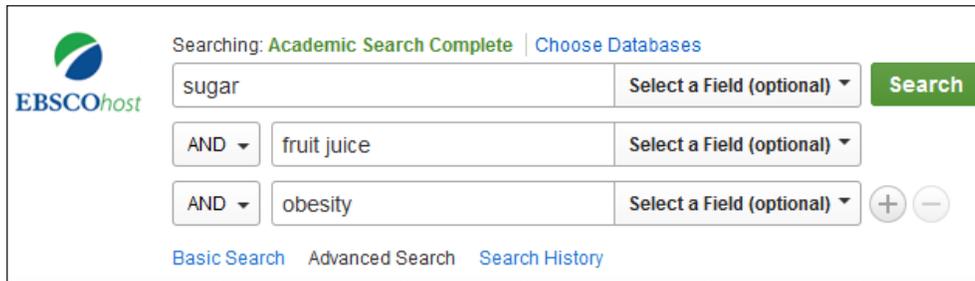

Figure 1 - Advanced Search screen in the Academic Search Complete database

After performing the search, pay attention to the subject terms that are applied to each item; they can provide valuable alernative terms for tweaking your search.

Limiters can be used to narrow your results. However, limiters should be used sparingly at the start of your research as they may remove items that might provide other terms for you to try.

Be patient. You might not find the best articles or books for your topic on your first try. It's important to remember that doing research takes time and getting good at doing research takes practice.

Additional Help

Library website: www.stritch.edu/library

Live Chat with a Librarian

Library Reference Desk: 414-410-4257

Email: reference@stritch.edu