

Search Tips

As you go through the research process it's helpful to **keep a list of search words**. These will be handy as you use various search engines, databases, library catalogs, book indexes, etc.

The **advanced search** feature in some library databases allows for more precise searching.

Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) can be used to connect search words. Use AND when you want both terms to appear. Use OR for synonyms (adolescents OR teenagers). Use NOT to exclude words (students NOT elementary).

Truncation means using a wildcard symbol in order to find various forms of a word. For example: *teen** will retrieve *teens, teenage, teenager, teenagers*.

Use **quotation marks** to keep words together as a phrase ("right to bear arms")

Using advanced search to limit to specific **fields** (such as subject, article title, publication title, abstract, full text) can produce more precise results.

Selecting sources

- Does your **assignment** require certain types of sources?
- Do you need very **current information**? If so, use periodicals and/or the Web.
- Do you need **extensive information**? If so, use books.
- In general it's good to have a **variety of sources** (books, periodicals, web, etc.).
- Make sure you have sources that are appropriate for **college-level research**.
- Make sure all your sources are **credible**.
- Does the library website have a **Research Guide** related to your topic?
- **Ask a librarian** for advice on the best sources for your topic.