

Academic Search Premier Tutorial

Hi there. My name's David McCusker. I'm one of the librarians at the American River College Library. In this tutorial, I'll show you how to find magazine and journal articles using the library's databases. Magazine and journal articles will be a very important source for most of the research assignments that you'll have. Please keep in mind that this tutorial is going to cover just the basics. There are a lot of things that you can do with the databases that we don't have time to cover here. If you try searching for articles, and you're not having success, visit the library and talk with a librarian. Working with a librarian will save you time and ensure that you get the best resources for your assignment.

So, what is a database? A database is a collection; most of the library databases are collections of articles from newspapers, magazines, and journals. We'll get into the library databases from the library's homepage. You can see that there are databases covering a variety of topics. If I was doing research for a business class, I'd look at the business databases. If I was working on a paper for psychology, I'd go into the psychology database. One database that is going to work well for almost any topic that you might have is Academic Search Premier. If you're using a computer on campus, you'll be able to get right into the database.

If you're off campus, you'll be prompted for the number from your Access Card, which is your student ID. You can take a look at the off-campus access to the databases tutorial for a step by step guide for using the databases from off-campus.

Once we open up Academic Search Premier, you can see that the database starts us off with a keyword search. One thing to remember when doing keyword searching is that we're only going to find articles that use exactly the language we use. If the thesis of my paper is, "McDonald's makes kids fat" and I search for those words, I don't get any hits. We need to think about whether or not there are other terms that I could search for. Instead of McDonald's I'll try searching for fast food, I'm going to try children instead of

kids and I'll try obese instead of fat. I'll just take the word makes out; that's just not a useful keyword. There's one other thing I could try here. Instead of children, I'll put an asterisk at the end of the word child. That asterisk makes it so that I get any word that starts with child; now instead of just children, I get child, children, childhood. I'll also put an asterisk after the s in obese. Now I can get obese or obesity. When I run this search, you can see I over 170 hits. So if you try a search in the databases and don't get any hit or very few hits, think about whether or not there are other terms you could try searching for.

As we scan through our results, you can see that some have links to the full text of the articles, but some do not. The ones that do not, we can't actually get the article through this database. All we can get is the abstract, a summary of the article. Now if you find a great article and it's abstract only, come talk to one of the librarians because there may be other ways we could get this article, but here since we have so many articles, let's narrow our results to full text. This makes it so that every article we find, we'll be able to get right here through this database.

Once we do that, you can see that we're now down to about 100 articles. That's a fairly manageable number to look through, so I may not need to do this in this situation, but another option that we have is to narrow our search by subject. I'll come over to the left side of the page and click on Subject: Thesaurus term. I could click on any of these subjects that look helpful to narrow my search. You can see that clicking on the "obesity in children" link would cut my number of results dramatically.

Once you have a manageable number of hits, you can start scanning through your results. Anything that looks like a possibility, we can just click on the title. That will take us to the abstract. The abstract is a summary of the article. We'll read that summary and if we think the article is useful, we can click on the full text link to get into the article or we can print or email the article to ourselves.

When you do print or email an article, you can make the database create a citation for the article. For most research assignments, you'll need to show your instructor citations for the resources you used. You can select APA or MLA, whichever your instructor prefers. The database does sometimes make errors, so you do need to double check the citations, but having the database create the citation will save you a lot of time.

I hope this tutorial was helpful. Remember that it was just an introduction. Please consult with a librarian if you're not having success with your searching. Thanks.