

OFFICIAL COURSE STUDY GUIDE

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# Library Research Skills

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*Source types, search strategy, and databases - the research fundamentals  
nobody formally teaches.*

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LEARNING & STUDY SKILLS · BEGINNER · 4 MODULES · 1 HR 21 MIN

Course by Conestoga College Library · Curated and published by MegaCourse

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## **Library Research Skills: The Complete Study Guide**

2026 Edition

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MegaCourse curates the world's best free courses into structured learning paths with study guides, practice material, and certificates. This guide accompanies the MegaCourse course "Library Research Skills", taught by Conestoga College Library. It is designed to be read alongside the video lessons and to serve as a standalone reference for review.

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# Contents

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|                                                                 |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <i>About This Course</i>                                        | 4  |
| CHAPTER 1     Getting Started with Library Research             | 6  |
| CHAPTER 2     Preparing for Effective Research                  | 10 |
| CHAPTER 3     Research Fundamentals: Finding and Searching      | 16 |
| CHAPTER 4     Applying Research Skills and Managing Information | 23 |
| <i>Glossary</i>                                                 | 28 |
| <i>Answer Key</i>                                               | 30 |
| <i>Where to Go Next</i>                                         | 34 |

## INTRODUCTION

# About This Course

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Welcome to the official study guide for "Library Research Skills." This course addresses a critical gap in many learning paths: the fundamental research techniques often overlooked in formal education. Effective research is not just about finding information; it is about finding the *right* information efficiently and reliably.

This course focuses on essential skills. You will learn to identify different source types, craft precise search strategies, navigate academic databases, and correctly evaluate and cite your findings. These skills are vital for academic success, professional development, and informed decision-making in any field.

Conestoga College Library developed the core instructional videos for this course. MegaCourse then structured this content into a clear learning path, complete with learning outcomes, progress tracking, and a certificate of completion. This guide complements the video lessons, providing summaries, additional context, and opportunities for practice.

## Course Facts

|                   |                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FORMAT            | 4 modules · 30 lessons                                                                                              |
| VIDEO INSTRUCTION | About 1 hr 21 min                                                                                                   |
| LEVEL             | Beginner                                                                                                            |
| CATEGORY          | Learning & Study Skills                                                                                             |
| INSTRUCTOR        | Conestoga College Library                                                                                           |
| CERTIFICATE       | Included with course completion on MegaCourse                                                                       |
| COURSE HOME       | <a href="https://megacourse.app/courses/library-research-skills">megacourse.app/courses/library-research-skills</a> |

## What You Will Learn

- Distinguish source types and when each is appropriate.
- Build search strategies that find what Google misses.
- Use academic databases with confidence.
- Evaluate and cite sources correctly.

## Who This Course Is For

This course is designed for anyone who needs to improve their research abilities. It serves students, professionals, and lifelong learners. If you have ever felt overwhelmed by the amount of information available or unsure how to find credible sources, this course will provide the foundational skills you need.

This is a beginner-level course. It assumes no prior knowledge of research methodologies or library systems. All necessary concepts are introduced and explained from the ground up.

## Before You Start

- No prior experience is required.

## How to Use This Guide

This study guide is an integral part of your learning experience. We recommend you watch the video lessons first, then use this guide to review key concepts. Each module in the guide corresponds to a module in the online course, making it easy to follow along. You can pause videos to consult the guide or use the guide for quick reference after completing a lesson.

The course is structured into 4 modules and 30 lessons, totaling about 1 hour and 21 minutes of video instruction. You can complete it at your own pace. Consider breaking down each module into smaller, manageable study sessions. Review the learning outcomes at the start of each module to set your focus.

This guide includes review questions and a glossary of terms. Use the review questions to test your understanding before moving to the next section. The glossary defines important terminology, helping you build a strong vocabulary for research discussions.

## CHAPTER 1

# Getting Started with Library Research

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This chapter introduces the fundamental skills for effective library research. You will learn about the essential resources and support available through the Conestoga College Library. Understanding how to identify and use different types of information sources is crucial for academic success.

Developing a strong search strategy is also key. This chapter will guide you through building effective search queries and applying them within the library's main search platform, Page 1+. Mastering these basics will equip you to find the reliable information your assignments require.

## Navigating the Conestoga Library and its Support Services

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Covers: Welcome to the Conestoga Library! · Key Areas Of The Library Website · Online Supports from the Library (see Description for 2023 Updates) · Where and How to Access Library Resources (2017)

Welcome to the Conestoga College Library. The library is a vital resource for your academic path. It offers extensive collections, expert assistance, and dedicated study spaces. Understanding how to use the library effectively will significantly improve your research skills and overall academic performance.

The library website serves as your primary gateway to resources and services. You can locate key areas quickly. Look for the main search bar, which allows you to begin searching for books, articles, and other materials. Other important sections include links to specific databases, research guides, and contact information for library staff. Familiarize yourself with the website's layout. This will save you time when you need information or help.

Conestoga Library provides a range of online support services. These services ensure you can get assistance whenever you need it, even if you cannot visit in person. Common support options include live chat with a librarian, email assistance, and booking one-on-one research appointments. These appointments allow you to discuss your research questions in detail with a subject expert. The library also offers workshops on various research topics throughout the semester. Check the library website for schedules and registration details. These workshops cover skills such as citation management, advanced searching, and using specific software. They are an excellent way to deepen your research knowledge.

Accessing library resources is straightforward, whether you are on campus or off campus. On campus, you can typically access most resources directly through the college's network. When you are off campus, you will need to log in using your college credentials. This login process authenticates you as a current student or staff member. It grants you access to subscription databases, e-books, and streaming media. Always start your research from the library website. This ensures proper authentication and full access to all available materials. Avoid searching directly through Google for academic articles, as this may lead to paywalls or limited access. The library's systems are designed to provide you with smooth entry to paid content. If you encounter any access issues, the online support services can help you troubleshoot. The library is committed to making its vast collection accessible to all students, regardless of their physical location.

## Distinguishing Information Source Types

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Covers: Information Source Types · Beginning - Resource Types

Understanding different types of information sources is fundamental to effective research. Not all sources are created equal. Each type serves a specific purpose and holds different levels of authority and reliability. You will encounter two main categorizations: popular versus scholarly sources, and primary versus secondary sources.

### Popular vs. Scholarly Sources

**Popular sources** are written for a general audience. Examples include magazines, newspapers, and many websites. They often use simple language and may not include extensive citations. Their primary purpose is to entertain, inform generally, or persuade. While useful for background information or current events, popular sources typically lack the depth and rigorous review required for academic research.

**Scholarly sources**, also known as academic or peer-reviewed sources, are written by experts for other experts or students in a specific field. These include academic journal articles, scholarly books, and conference papers. They undergo a rigorous peer-review process, where other experts evaluate the research for quality, accuracy, and methodology before publication. Scholarly sources feature complex language, detailed methodologies, extensive bibliographies, and original research or analysis. They are essential for academic assignments as they provide credible evidence and contribute to the body of knowledge in a discipline.

### Primary vs. Secondary Sources

**Primary sources** are original materials or firsthand accounts of an event or research. They are direct evidence. Examples include historical documents (letters, diaries, government reports), original research articles (reporting new findings), raw data, interviews, speeches, and creative works (novels, poems, art). Primary sources allow researchers to interpret information directly without filtering through another person's analysis. They are crucial for historical research, scientific studies, and literary analysis.

**Secondary sources** analyze, interpret, or discuss primary sources. They offer a second-hand account. Examples include textbooks, review articles, biographies, and critical essays. A secondary source often synthesizes information from multiple primary sources to present a broader perspective or a new interpretation. For instance, a history textbook is a secondary source that interprets many primary historical documents. A literature review article summarizes and analyzes various original research papers. Secondary sources help you understand a topic by providing context, analysis, and different perspectives. They are valuable for gaining an overview of a subject or understanding existing scholarship.

Choosing the appropriate source type depends entirely on your research question and assignment requirements. For a research paper requiring original evidence, you will need primary sources. For a comprehensive overview of a topic, secondary sources are more suitable. Always evaluate the source's purpose, audience, and authority to ensure it meets your academic needs.

## Crafting Effective Search Strategies and Using Page 1+

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Covers: Page 1+ Advanced Searching · Creating a Search Strategy

A well-planned search strategy is the foundation of successful research. Simply typing a question into a search bar often yields too many irrelevant results or misses key information. Developing a strategy helps you focus your search, retrieve more precise results, and save time. The process begins with identifying your core concepts and translating them into effective search terms.

Start by breaking down your research question into its main ideas or keywords. For example, if your question is, 'What are the effects of social media on student mental health?', your core concepts are 'social media,' 'student,' and 'mental health.'

Next, brainstorm synonyms and related terms for each keyword. This broadens your search without making it too general. For 'social media,' you might use 'Facebook,' 'Twitter,' 'Instagram,' or 'online platforms.' For 'student,' consider 'college student,' 'university student,' or 'youth.' For 'mental health,' think of 'well-being,' 'anxiety,' 'depression,' or 'stress.'

### Using Boolean Operators

Boolean operators are simple words (AND, OR, NOT) that connect your search terms. They tell the search engine how to combine your keywords.

- **AND:** Narrows your search. It requires all connected terms to be present in the results. Use AND to combine different concepts. For example, `social media AND mental health` will find results that discuss both topics.
- **OR:** Broadens your search. It finds results that contain any of the connected terms. Use OR to combine synonyms or related concepts. For example, `anxiety OR depression OR stress` will find articles discussing any of these conditions.
- **NOT:** Excludes terms from your search. Use NOT to remove irrelevant results. For example, `social media NOT marketing` will exclude articles about social media marketing.

### Other Search Techniques

- **Quotation Marks (" "):** Use quotation marks for exact phrases. This ensures the words appear together in that specific order. For example, searching for `"mental health"` will find that exact phrase, rather than articles with 'mental' in one place and 'health' in another.
- **Truncation (\*):** Use an asterisk at the end of a word root to find variations of that word. For example, `child*` will find 'child,' 'children,' 'childhood,' etc. This is useful for capturing different forms of a word.

### Applying Strategy in Page 1+

Page 1+ is the Conestoga Library's primary search tool. It allows you to search across many of the library's resources simultaneously, including books, e-books, journal articles, and media. To use Page 1+ effectively:

1. **Start with your main keywords:** Type your initial terms into the search bar.
2. **Apply Boolean operators:** Use the advanced search options or type AND, OR, NOT directly into the search bar to combine your terms. Group OR statements with parentheses. For example: (social media OR online platforms) AND (student\* OR youth) AND (mental health OR anxiety OR depression).
3. **Use filters:** After your initial search, refine your results using the filters on the side of the results page. Common filters include 'Source Type' (e.g., academic journals, books), 'Publication Date,' and 'Peer-Reviewed' status. Selecting 'Peer-Reviewed' is crucial for academic assignments.

Practice is key to mastering search strategies. Experiment with different combinations of terms and operators. Observe how changing your search impacts the results. This iterative process will help you find the most relevant and high-quality information for your research.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Conestoga Library offers extensive online resources and support, including chat, email, and one-on-one appointments, accessible both on and off campus.
- Information sources are categorized as popular or scholarly, and as primary or secondary, each serving different research purposes.
- Scholarly sources undergo peer review and are essential for academic research, providing credible, in-depth analysis.
- Primary sources offer original, firsthand accounts, while secondary sources analyze and interpret primary materials.
- Effective search strategies involve breaking down research questions into keywords, using synonyms, and applying Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT).
- Quotation marks ensure exact phrase searching, and truncation (asterisk) finds word variations, enhancing search precision.
- Page 1+ is the library's main search tool; use its advanced features and filters to refine results by source type, date, and peer-review status.

### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

*Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.*

1. What are the main types of online support offered by the Conestoga Library?
2. How do scholarly sources differ from popular sources, and why are scholarly sources preferred for academic research?
3. When would you use a primary source versus a secondary source in your research?
4. Explain the purpose of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) in building a search strategy.
5. What is Page 1+ and what are two ways you can refine your search results within it?

## CHAPTER 2

# Preparing for Effective Research

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This chapter guides you through the essential preparatory steps for successful library research. You will learn why the library is your most valuable resource, how to formulate a clear research question, and the importance of background research. We will also cover practical skills for finding and refining online articles using powerful search filters. Finally, you will gain a comprehensive understanding of various resource types, enabling you to select the most appropriate information for your academic needs.

Mastering these foundational skills will save you time and improve the quality of your research projects. This chapter provides the knowledge you need to approach any research task with confidence, ensuring you find reliable and relevant information efficiently.

## The Foundation of Library Research

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Covers: The Top 3 Reasons to Start your Research at the Library (2017) · Preparing: Getting Started Searching · Preparing - Defining a Research Question and Doing Background Research (2017)

Starting any research project can feel daunting. The sheer volume of information available online often leads to confusion or frustration. This is where your college library becomes an indispensable partner. Libraries offer a structured, reliable environment for information discovery, a stark contrast to the often chaotic nature of general web searches. There are three primary reasons to begin your research at the library. First, libraries provide access to **curated, reliable information**. Unlike the open internet, library resources have undergone vetting processes. This means you are accessing scholarly articles, credible books, and authoritative reports. Second, libraries give you access to **subscription databases**. These specialized search engines contain millions of academic articles, journals, and other premium content that is not freely available through Google or other public search engines. Your tuition or fees cover the cost of these subscriptions, giving you a significant advantage. Third, libraries offer **expert help**. Librarians are trained information professionals. They can guide you through complex search strategies, recommend specific resources, and troubleshoot research challenges. Think of them as your personal research coaches.

Before you even type a word into a search bar, effective research requires preparation. Many students make the mistake of jumping directly into a broad search query. This often yields too many irrelevant results. A better approach involves two key steps: defining a research question and conducting background research.

### Defining a Research Question

A clear, focused **research question** is the compass for your entire project. Without one, you risk drifting aimlessly through information, collecting facts without a purpose. A good research question is specific, answerable, and interesting. Consider the difference:

- **Too Broad:** "What are the effects of climate change?" (This question is vast. It could fill many books.)
- **Better:** "How does climate change impact agricultural yields in Saskatchewan?" (This is more focused, specific to a region and a type of impact.)
- **Even Better:** "What mitigation strategies have Saskatchewan farmers adopted to address the impact of climate change on wheat yields between 2010 and 2020?" (This question is precise, defines a scope, and suggests specific types of information needed.)

To develop a strong research question, start with a topic that genuinely interests you. Brainstorm keywords and concepts related to that topic. Ask yourself what you truly want to find out. Refine your question several times until it is specific enough to guide your search, but not so narrow that no information exists.

### Doing Background Research

Once you have a preliminary research question, conduct some **background research**. This initial exploration helps you understand the basic concepts, identify key terms, and discover major debates or figures in your field. Background research is not about finding every answer. It is about building foundational knowledge. Good sources for background research include:

- **Encyclopedias:** Academic encyclopedias (like *Britannica Academic* or specialized subject encyclopedias) provide concise overviews and often list further readings.
- **Dictionaries:** For defining unfamiliar terminology.
- **Textbooks:** Offer comprehensive introductions to subjects.
- **Wikipedia:** Can be a starting point to grasp concepts and identify keywords, but always verify information from scholarly sources. Do not cite Wikipedia in academic papers.

During background research, pay attention to the vocabulary used by experts. Note synonyms, broader terms, and narrower terms. These will become your keywords for more advanced searches. For example, if your topic is "sustainable agriculture," background research might introduce terms like "agroecology," "permaculture," "crop rotation," or "organic farming." This preparation ensures your subsequent searches are much more effective and targeted.

## Finding and Refining Information

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Covers: Retrieving Online Articles · Refining Your Results Using Search Filters

After you have prepared your research question and gathered initial keywords, the next step is to actively search for information. Library databases are your primary tools for finding scholarly articles and other academic resources. Unlike a general web search, these databases are designed for precision and academic rigor. When you conduct a search in a library database, you are typically searching within a vast collection of published works.

### Retrieving Online Articles

When you find an article of interest, your goal is to access its full content. Most library databases provide links to the full text of articles, often in PDF or HTML format.

- **PDF (Portable Document Format):** This format presents the article exactly as it appeared in its original print publication. It is ideal for citing page numbers and for a professional, consistent reading experience.
- **HTML (HyperText Markup Language):** This format displays the article as a webpage. It is often easier to read on mobile devices and allows for quick text searches within the browser.

Sometimes, the full text is not immediately available within the database you are using. In such cases, look for a "Find It" or "Get Full Text" button. This button usually links to other databases or to your library's interlibrary loan service. If an article is not directly accessible, your library can often obtain it for you from another institution, typically free of charge. This process might take a few days, so plan your research time accordingly. Always prefer accessing articles through your library's subscriptions rather than paying for them directly.

### Refining Your Results Using Search Filters

Even with a well-defined research question and good keywords, your initial search may yield hundreds or thousands of results. This is where **search filters** become invaluable. Filters allow you to narrow down your results to the most relevant items. They are usually found on the left-hand side of the search results page in most databases.

Common and highly useful filters include:

- **Publication Date:** This filter lets you specify a range of years. For rapidly evolving fields like technology or medicine, you might limit to the last 5 or 10 years. For historical topics, you might expand the range.
- **Source Type:** This is one of the most important filters for academic research. You can often choose to see only "Scholarly Journals," "Peer-Reviewed Articles," "Books," "Newspapers," or "Magazines." For most academic assignments, you will prioritize scholarly or peer-reviewed articles.
- **Subject/Topic:** Databases often categorize articles by specific subject headings. Using this filter can help you find articles that are precisely on your topic, even if your initial keywords were slightly different.
- **Author:** If you know a specific author, you can filter results to see only their publications.
- **Language:** Useful if you need articles in a specific language or want to exclude articles in languages you do not read.
- **Full Text:** This filter limits results to only those articles for which the full text is immediately available within that specific database. Use this with caution, as it might exclude highly relevant articles available through other library services.

**Worked Example: Applying Filters** Imagine you searched for "impact of social media on mental health" and received 15,000 results.

1. **First Filter: Publication Date.** You need current research, so you apply a filter for "Last 5 years." This reduces results to 4,000.
2. **Second Filter: Source Type.** Your assignment requires scholarly sources, so you select "Scholarly Journals" and "Peer-Reviewed." This brings the count down to 800.

3. **Third Filter: Subject.** You notice many articles are about "adolescent mental health." Since your focus is broader, you look for a subject filter like "Social Media - Psychological Aspects" or "Mental Health - Social Aspects." Applying this might reduce your results to 250 highly relevant articles.

Always review a few results after applying each filter. This helps ensure you are not accidentally filtering out important information. Experiment with different combinations of filters to find the sweet spot between too many results and too few.

## Understanding and Selecting Resource Types

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Covers: Preparing - Types of Resources · Preparing - Types of Resources Part 1 - Library Resources · Preparing - Types of Resources, Part 2: Websites

Not all information sources are created equal. Different research questions and academic assignments require different types of resources. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for effective research and for meeting the requirements of your instructors. Resources can generally be categorized by their origin, purpose, and audience.

### Library Resources

Libraries provide access to a wide array of high-quality, vetted resources. These are typically organized and searchable through the library catalog and specialized databases.

#### *Scholarly (Peer-Reviewed) Journals*

These are the backbone of academic research.

- **Characteristics:** Articles are written by experts for experts. They present original research, theories, or critical analyses. Before publication, they undergo **peer review**, a rigorous process where other experts in the field evaluate the article for quality, methodology, and accuracy. They always include extensive citations and a bibliography.
- **When to Use:** Essential for academic papers, literature reviews, and when you need in-depth, authoritative information based on research.

### Books

Libraries offer various types of books:

- **Monographs:** Single-authored books providing in-depth treatment of a specific subject. Good for broader context or historical perspective.
- **Edited Collections:** Books where different authors contribute chapters on a related theme. Each chapter can be treated as a scholarly piece.
- **Textbooks:** Designed for teaching, providing comprehensive overviews. Good for background information but generally not for citing in advanced academic papers.
- **When to Use:** For foundational knowledge, historical context, comprehensive overviews, or detailed analysis.

### **Newspapers and Magazines**

These provide current events and general interest information.

- **Newspapers:** Offer daily or weekly reporting on events and opinions for a general audience. Examples include *The Globe and Mail*, *The New York Times*.
- **Magazines:** Range from popular interest (*Maclean's*) to more specialized but non-scholarly (*Scientific American*). Written for a broader audience than scholarly journals.
- **When to Use:** For current events, public opinion, historical perspectives on events, or to understand popular culture discussions. Rarely suitable for in-depth academic analysis.

### **Other Library Resources**

This category includes conference proceedings, dissertations and theses (original research by graduate students), government documents (reports, statistics, policy papers), and reference works (encyclopedias, dictionaries). Each serves specific research needs.

### **Websites**

The open internet offers an enormous amount of information, but its quality varies wildly. Critical evaluation is paramount. When using websites, consider these evaluation criteria:

#### **Evaluating Websites (CRAAP Test)**

- **Currency:** When was the information published or updated? Is it recent enough?
- **Relevance:** Does the information directly relate to your research question and academic level?
- **Authority:** Who is the author or publisher? What are their credentials? Is the website affiliated with a reputable organization (.gov.edu, established .org)?
- **Accuracy:** Can you verify the information with other sources? Are there errors in spelling or grammar? Does the site present evidence?
- **Purpose:** Why was the information published? Is it to inform, persuade, sell, or entertain? Be wary of sites with a strong bias or commercial agenda.

#### **Reliable Websites**

- **.gov sites:** Government agencies publish statistics, reports, and official documents.
- **.edu sites:** Educational institutions provide academic resources and faculty research.
- **Reputable organizational .org sites:** Non-profit organizations (e.g., World Health Organization) publish research and advocacy materials.
- **Established News Sources:** Websites of respected newspapers or broadcasters (e.g., CBC News) are reliable for current events.

#### **Websites to Approach with Caution**

- **Personal blogs or social media posts:** Often lack peer review or editorial oversight.
- **Commercial sites (.com):** Their primary purpose is often to sell products or services, which can introduce bias.

- **Sites with no clear author, publisher, or date:** Information cannot be verified.

Websites are appropriate for official statistics, government reports, primary source documents (e.g., historical speeches), or information from reputable non-profits. Always apply critical thinking before using web-based information in academic work.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Begin your research at the library to access curated, reliable information, subscription databases, and expert assistance from librarians.
- A focused research question is essential for guiding your search and preventing information overload.
- Conduct background research using encyclopedias and textbooks to build foundational knowledge and identify key search terms.
- Library databases offer powerful search filters like publication date and source type to refine results and locate relevant scholarly articles.
- Understand the characteristics of different resource types, such as scholarly journals, books, and newspapers, to select appropriate information for your academic needs.
- Critically evaluate websites using criteria like currency, authority, and purpose, as the quality of information on the open internet varies widely.

### CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

*Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.*

1. Why is it recommended to start research at the library rather than with a general web search?
2. What is the purpose of defining a research question, and how does a focused question differ from a broad one?
3. Describe two common search filters in library databases and explain how they help refine results.
4. What are the key characteristics of a scholarly (peer-reviewed) journal article, and when should you prioritize using them?
5. When evaluating a website for academic use, what does the "Authority" criterion of the CRAAP Test refer to?

## CHAPTER 3

# Research Fundamentals: Finding and Searching

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This chapter guides you through the practical steps of finding academic resources. It explains the importance of specialized databases and how they differ from general web searches. You will learn to build effective search strategies using keywords, phrases, and advanced operators. The chapter also covers the process of locating both physical books and online articles. Mastering these techniques will significantly improve the quality and efficiency of your research.

## Navigating Academic Databases

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Covers: Finding Databases: Part 1 - What is a Database? · Finding Databases - Part 2 - The Benefits of Searching Databases

An academic database is a specialized, organized collection of information. It holds scholarly articles, journal issues, conference papers, dissertations, and often full books. Unlike a general web search engine like Google, databases focus on vetted, credible content. They are subscription services, meaning your college library pays for access. This ensures the material you find is authoritative and often peer-reviewed.

Databases offer significant benefits for researchers. First, the content is curated. This means experts have reviewed most of the material for quality and accuracy before publication. This saves you time evaluating sources. Second, databases provide comprehensive coverage within specific subject areas. A database like PsycINFO specializes in psychology, offering a depth of research you would not find with a general search. Third, databases feature powerful search tools. You can apply filters for publication date, source type, author, or even specific research methodologies. These tools allow for highly targeted searches that find exactly what you need.

Accessing these databases is straightforward through your library's website. You typically navigate to a "Databases" or "Research Guides" section. From there, you might browse by subject, title, or type. Once you select a database, you may need to log in with your student ID and password. This authentication confirms you are an authorized user of the library's subscriptions.

Consider the difference in results. A Google search for "climate change effects" might return news articles, blog posts, and government reports. A search in an environmental science database will yield peer-reviewed studies, scientific journal articles, and research papers from leading experts. The database results are more likely to support academic arguments with rigorous evidence.

Many databases share a similar interface. You will usually see a search bar at the top or center of the page. Below it, or on the side, you will find options for advanced search, filters, and limiters. Take time to explore the interface of any new database you use. Familiarize yourself with how to apply filters, such as limiting results to "peer-reviewed articles" or "last 5 years."

### Practice: Explore Your Library's Databases

Visit your college library's website. Find the link to their list of academic databases. Browse the list. Identify at least two databases relevant to your major or a subject you are interested in. Click into one of them. Spend a few minutes exploring its main search page and any available advanced search options. Do not worry about searching yet. Focus on understanding the layout and available features. Notice if there are tutorials or help sections within the database itself. This initial exploration builds confidence and familiarity.

## Building Precise Search Queries

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Covers: Choosing Keywords and Brainstorming · Advanced Searching: Searching with Phrases · Capturing Word Variations

Effective research starts with a strong search strategy. This means carefully choosing your keywords and knowing how to combine them. Begin by breaking down your research question into its main concepts. For example, if your question is "What is the impact of remote learning on student engagement in higher education?", your core concepts are "remote learning," "student engagement," and "higher education."

### Choosing Keywords and Brainstorming

Once you identify core concepts, brainstorm a list of synonyms and related terms for each. Think broadly and narrowly. Use a thesaurus if you need ideas.

- **Concept 1: Remote Learning**
  - Synonyms: online learning, distance education, virtual classrooms, e-learning
  - Related: blended learning, hybrid education
- **Concept 2: Student Engagement**
  - Synonyms: student participation, academic involvement, motivation, persistence
  - Related: student retention, learning outcomes
- **Concept 3: Higher Education**
  - Synonyms: university, college, post-secondary education, tertiary education
  - Related: undergraduates, graduate students

Create a separate list for each concept. This organized approach helps you build comprehensive searches.

### Searching with Phrases

When a concept consists of multiple words that must appear together, use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase. This tells the database to treat the words as a single unit.

- Searching for "remote learning" will only return results where "remote" and "learning" appear side by side in that order.
- Searching for remote learning (without quotes) will find documents where "remote" and "learning" appear anywhere, not necessarily together. This can lead to less relevant results. Always use quotation marks for specific multi-word terms like "mental health," "social media," or "artificial intelligence."

## Capturing Word Variations

Words often have different endings or spellings. Truncation, also known as using wildcards, allows you to search for all variations of a word root simultaneously. The most common truncation symbol is an asterisk (\*). Some databases use a question mark (?) for single character variations.

- `child*` will find child, children, childhood, childish.
- `educat*` will find educate, education, educational, educator.
- `wom?n` will find woman and women (using a single character wildcard). Place the truncation symbol at the point where the word stem ends and variations begin. Be careful not to truncate too early, as `e*` would return too many irrelevant words starting with "e". Check the specific database's help section for its exact truncation symbols and rules. Using truncation broadens your search efficiently without listing every possible word form.

## Practice: Develop Keywords and Phrases

Take a new research topic, for example, "The role of nutrition in preventing chronic diseases in older adults."

1. Identify the three main concepts.
2. For each concept, brainstorm at least five synonyms or related terms.
3. Identify any multi-word concepts that should be searched as exact phrases.
4. Choose two words from your list and apply truncation to capture variations. Write down the truncated form you would use.

## Mastering Search Operators

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Covers: Finding - Advanced Searching 3: Searching with Operators (2017)

Search operators are powerful tools that allow you to combine, broaden, or narrow your search terms with precision. The most common operators are Boolean operators: AND, OR, and NOT. Understanding how to use them is fundamental to effective database searching.

### Boolean Operator: AND

The `AND` operator connects different concepts. It tells the database to find results that contain *all* the specified terms. Using `AND` *narrows* your search.

- Example: `"remote learning" AND "student engagement"`
- This search will only return articles that mention both "remote learning" and "student engagement." If an article mentions only one of these, it will not appear in your results.
- Use `AND` to combine your main research concepts.

### Boolean Operator: OR

The `OR` operator connects synonyms or related terms for the *same* concept. It tells the database to find results that contain *any* of the specified terms. Using `OR` *broadens* your search.

- Example: (university OR college OR "higher education")
- This search will find articles that mention "university," "college," or "higher education." It ensures you capture a wider range of relevant documents for that single concept.
- Always use OR when listing alternative keywords for a concept.

### Boolean Operator: NOT

The NOT operator excludes specific terms from your search. It tells the database to find results that contain the first term but *not* the second. Use NOT with caution, as it can sometimes exclude relevant articles that mention the excluded term in a minor context.

- Example: apple NOT fruit
- This search might be used if you are researching Apple Inc. and want to avoid articles about the fruit.
- Example: depression NOT "postpartum depression"
- This would exclude articles specifically about postpartum depression if your focus is on other forms.

### Using Parentheses for Grouping

Parentheses are crucial when combining AND and OR operators. They tell the database the order in which to process your search terms, similar to mathematical equations. Terms inside parentheses are processed first.

- Incorrect: remote learning OR online learning AND student engagement
- Without parentheses, the database might interpret this as remote learning OR (online learning AND student engagement). This would give you articles on "remote learning" *or* articles that contain both "online learning" and "student engagement." This is likely not what you intended.
- Correct: ("remote learning" OR "online learning") AND "student engagement"
- This search correctly groups the synonyms for the first concept. It will find articles that contain *either* "remote learning" *or* "online learning," AND also contain "student engagement." This ensures all parts of your research question are addressed.

### Field Searching

Most academic databases allow you to search within specific fields of an article record. Common fields include:

- **Title (TI):** Searches only the article title.
- **Author (AU):** Searches for a specific author.
- **Abstract (AB):** Searches the article's summary.
- **Subject (SU):** Searches subject headings assigned by the database. Using field searching can significantly improve the relevance of your results. For example, TI:"climate change" is much more precise than just climate change because it ensures the phrase is a central topic of the article. The exact codes for field searching (e.g., TI: , AU: ) vary by database, so check the database's help section.

### Practice: Constructing Complex Searches

Using the topic "The effectiveness of mindfulness practices for reducing anxiety in college students":

1. Identify the main concepts.
2. Brainstorm synonyms for each concept.
3. Construct a comprehensive search string using **AND**, **OR**, parentheses, and quotation marks.
  - Example: (mindfulness OR meditation) AND (anxiety OR stress) AND ("college students" OR undergraduates)
4. Try to add a field search to your string, imagining you want to find articles where "mindfulness" is in the title.

## Retrieving Your Research Materials

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Covers: Finding - Locating Books on the Shelf (2017) · Finding - Retrieving Full-Text of Articles Available Online

Finding relevant sources is only half the battle. The next step is to locate and access the full content of those materials, whether they are physical books or online articles.

### Locating Books on the Shelf

When you find a book in your library's online catalog, the most important piece of information is its call number. Call numbers are like addresses for books. They tell you exactly where to find a book on the library shelves. Most academic libraries use either the Library of Congress (LC) Classification System or the Dewey Decimal Classification System.

- **Library of Congress (LC) Example:** QA76.73.J38 S53 2019
- **QA:** Represents Mathematics, Computers, and Computer Science.
- **76.73:** Narrows down to computer software.
- **J38:** Relates to the specific author or title.
- **S53:** Further refines the specific work.
- **2019:** The publication year. Books are arranged alphabetically by the first letter(s), then numerically, then alphabetically by the next set of letters, and so on. To find a book, write down the full call number. Go to the correct floor or section of the library. Look for the range of call numbers that includes yours. Read the call numbers on the book spines carefully. They are read line by line.

### Common Mistakes with Call Numbers:

- Misreading letters or numbers. A "B" is not a "D." "100" comes before "200."
- Ignoring decimal points. QA76.73 comes before QA76.8.
- Not checking the book's status in the catalog. It might be checked out, on hold, or at a different campus.

### Retrieving Full-Text of Articles Available Online

After performing a database search, your results list will show articles. Many will have direct links to the full text.

- **Direct PDF or HTML Links:** Look for buttons or links labeled "PDF Full Text," "HTML Full Text," or similar. Clicking these will open the article directly in your browser or download a PDF file. HTML text is often viewable directly within the database interface.
- **"Find It" or "Check for Full Text" Buttons:** If a direct link is not present, you will often see a button like "Find It" or "Check for Full Text." This button is an OpenURL resolver. It queries your library's other databases and subscriptions to see if the article is available elsewhere. Clicking it may take you to another database where the full text resides, or it might provide a link to the journal's website.
- **Interlibrary Loan (ILL):** If the "Find It" button does not locate the full text, the article is likely not available through your library's current subscriptions. Do not give up. Most libraries offer an Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service. This allows you to request articles or books from other libraries. ILL requests typically take a few days to process, but they are a vital resource for accessing specialized materials. Look for an ILL link on your library's website or directly within the "Find It" results.

Always remember to save the articles you find. Download PDFs to your computer, or use the database's citation export features to keep track of your sources. This prevents you from having to search for them again later.

### Practice: Locate and Retrieve

1. **Book Location:** Go to your library's online catalog. Search for a specific book on a topic of interest. Note its full call number and its current status (e.g., "Available," "Checked Out"). If available, imagine you are walking to the shelf to retrieve it. Visualize the process of reading the call number on the spine.
2. **Article Retrieval:** Perform a search in one of your library's academic databases. Find an article that looks relevant.
  - If it has a direct PDF link, download it.
  - If it has a "Find It" or "Check for Full Text" button, click it and follow the links to try and access the full text.
  - If you cannot find the full text, locate the Interlibrary Loan service on your library's website and understand how to submit a request.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Academic databases offer reliable, scholarly content not always found on the open web.
- Effective research begins with carefully chosen keywords and brainstorming synonyms.
- Quotation marks ensure precise phrase searching in databases.
- Truncation symbols help capture various word endings and spellings.
- Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) are essential for refining search results.
- Library call numbers are the key to locating physical books on the shelves.
- Use "Find It" links or Interlibrary Loan to access articles not immediately available.

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**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

*Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.*

1. Why are academic databases generally preferred over general web search engines for scholarly research?
2. Explain how using quotation marks in a search query changes the results compared to not using them. Provide an example.
3. You are researching "the effects of social media on adolescent mental health." Construct a search string using keywords, a phrase, truncation, and at least two Boolean operators.
4. Describe the purpose of a library call number and how you would use it to find a book in a physical library.
5. What should you do if a database search result indicates an article is relevant, but there is no direct "PDF" or "HTML Full Text" link immediately visible?

## CHAPTER 4

# Applying Research Skills and Managing Information

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This chapter builds on your foundational research skills by focusing on how to locate specific types of digital resources and refine your search strategies. You will learn to navigate library systems to find streaming videos and eBooks, essential for diverse academic needs. The chapter also provides a comprehensive guide to developing effective keywords, using advanced search techniques, and understanding the critical distinction between peer-reviewed journals and general magazines. Finally, you will discover best practices for saving and managing your research findings to ensure accuracy and efficiency in your academic work.

## Finding Digital Media Resources

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Covers: Finding Streaming Videos · Finding eBooks

Libraries offer a wealth of digital media resources beyond traditional print materials. Knowing how to access these can significantly enhance your research and learning experience. This section focuses on locating streaming videos and eBooks through your college library, ensuring you find credible and relevant content.

### Finding Streaming Videos

Streaming videos are valuable for many academic disciplines. They can include documentaries, educational films, recorded lectures, and interviews. Unlike general internet searches, using your library's resources guarantees access to licensed, high-quality content appropriate for academic use. The library often provides access to platforms that would otherwise require a paid subscription.

To find streaming videos, begin at your college library's website. Look for a section dedicated to "Databases," "Media," or "Streaming Video." Many libraries subscribe to major academic video platforms. Common examples include:

- **Criterion On-Demand:** Offers a wide range of feature films and documentaries.
- **NFB Campus (National Film Board of Canada):** Provides access to Canadian documentaries and animated films.
- **Kanopy:** Features a diverse collection of films, documentaries, and educational videos from various producers.
- **Academic Video Online (AVON):** A vast multidisciplinary collection of videos, including documentaries, interviews, and performances.

Once you navigate to a specific video database, use its internal search bar. You can search by title, subject, director, or keyword. For example, if you are researching climate change, you might search for "climate change documentary" or "environmental policy." Most platforms allow you to filter results by subject,

publication date, or content type. Always check for closed captions or transcripts, which can be helpful for accessibility and note-taking.

Remember that access to these platforms is usually authenticated through your college login. If you encounter issues, consult your library's help resources or contact a librarian. Relying on library-provided streaming services ensures you are using content with proper licensing for educational purposes, avoiding copyright issues often associated with publicly available videos.

### Finding eBooks

eBooks provide convenient access to scholarly texts, reference works, and textbooks from anywhere with an internet connection. They offer features like full-text searching, highlighting, and note-taking capabilities. Your library likely subscribes to several eBook collections, giving you access to thousands of titles.

Start your search on the library's main website, using the general search bar or navigating to an "eBooks" specific section. You can search for a specific title, author, or subject. For instance, if you need a textbook on "nursing ethics," type that phrase into the search box.

Key eBook platforms often include:

- **ProQuest Ebook Central:** A large collection of academic eBooks across many disciplines.
- **EBSCOhost Ebook Collection:** Another extensive collection, often integrated with other EBSCO databases.
- **VLeBooks:** Popular for textbooks and academic titles, particularly in the UK and Canada.

When viewing search results, look for options to "View Online," "Download," or "Read Full Text." Some eBooks allow full downloads for a limited period, while others are only available for online reading or chapter downloads. Pay attention to usage rights, such as the number of simultaneous users or printing limits.

Filters are crucial for narrowing your eBook search. You can filter by:

- **Publication Date:** To find the most current editions.
- **Subject:** To refine results to a specific area of study.
- **Availability:** To ensure the book is currently accessible.

A common mistake is assuming that all print books have an eBook equivalent available through the library. While libraries strive to offer a wide selection, not every title is available digitally. If you cannot find a specific eBook, check if a print copy is available or inquire about interlibrary loan options. Always verify the edition and publication year to ensure relevance for your research.

## Refining Your Research Process and Managing Information

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Covers: Part 1: Research and Referencing Skills (NURS8015) Intro and Keywords · Part 2: Research and Referencing Skills (NURS8015) Improving Your Search Results · Part 3: Research and Referencing Skills (NURS8015) Peer Reviewed Journals and Magazines · Part 4: Research and Referencing Skills (NURS8015) Remember to Save

Effective research requires a systematic approach to identifying relevant information and managing your findings. This section covers strategies for deconstructing your topic, building precise search queries, distinguishing credible sources, and organizing your research materials.

### Deconstructing Your Research Question and Generating Keywords

Every successful search begins with a clear understanding of your research question. Break your question into its core concepts. For instance, if your question is: "What are the most effective non-pharmacological interventions for managing chronic pain in elderly patients?"

The main concepts are:

1. Non-pharmacological interventions
2. Chronic pain
3. Elderly patients

For each concept, brainstorm synonyms and related terms. This expands your search options, accounting for different terminology authors might use.

- **Non-pharmacological interventions:** alternative therapies, complementary medicine, physical therapy, mindfulness, acupuncture.
- **Chronic pain:** persistent pain, long-term pain.
- **Elderly patients:** seniors, older adults, geriatric.

This keyword list will be the foundation for your database searches.

### Improving Your Search Results with Advanced Techniques

Once you have keywords, use advanced search techniques to refine your queries in academic databases.

- **Boolean Operators:**
- **AND:** Narrows results. All terms must be present. Example: `pain AND elderly`.
- **OR:** Broadens results. Any of the terms can be present. Use for synonyms. Example: `elderly OR geriatric`.
- **NOT:** Excludes terms. Use with care. Example: `pain NOT cancer`.
- **Truncation:** Use an asterisk (\*) at the root of a word to find variations. Example: `nurs*` finds nurse, nurses, nursing.
- **Phrase Searching:** Use quotation marks (" ") for exact phrases. Example: `"chronic pain"`.
- **Applying Filters:** Use database filters to narrow results by:
- **Publication Date:** To find recent research.
- **Source Type:** Select "Journal Article" or "Peer-Reviewed."
- **Subject:** To focus on specific sub-disciplines.

Combining these techniques creates powerful searches. For our example, a refined search might be:

`("chronic pain" OR "persistent pain") AND (elderly OR geriatric) AND (nurs* OR "physical therapy" OR mindfulness)`

## Peer-Reviewed Journals and Magazines

Distinguishing between peer-reviewed journals and general magazines is vital for academic credibility.

- **Peer-Reviewed Journals:** Articles are rigorously evaluated by independent experts (peers) in the field before publication. They present original research, use scholarly language, include extensive citations, and are written by academics for an academic audience. These are the preferred sources for college-level research. You can often identify them using a "peer-reviewed" filter in databases or by checking the journal's "About" section.
- **Magazines:** Articles are reviewed by editors, not external experts. They are written for a general audience, use simpler language, often contain advertisements, and may lack detailed citations. Their purpose is to inform or entertain a broader readership. While sometimes useful for background information, they are generally not suitable as primary academic sources.

## Remember to Save Your Research

Consistently saving and organizing your research findings is crucial for efficiency and academic integrity. This practice prevents lost work and simplifies the citation process.

Methods for saving include:

- **Database Features:** Most databases allow you to "Save to Folder," "Email," or "Export" selected articles, often including full citation details.
- **Manual Tracking:** Maintain a spreadsheet with key information such as author, title, publication year, journal name, DOI or URL, and a brief summary.
- **Citation Management Tools:** Software like Zotero, Mendeley, or EndNote can automatically collect, organize, and format citations. Learning to use one of these tools is highly recommended for long-term academic success.

Make it a habit to save full-text PDFs of relevant articles and their complete citation information as you find them. This proactive approach saves significant time when you begin writing your paper and compiling your bibliography.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Your college library provides access to licensed streaming videos and eBooks, which are valuable academic resources.
- Break down research questions into core concepts to generate a comprehensive list of keywords and synonyms.
- Use Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), truncation (\*), and phrase searching (" ") to build precise and effective search queries.
- Apply database filters for publication date, source type, and subject to narrow down your results efficiently.
- Prioritize peer-reviewed journal articles for academic assignments due to their rigorous expert evaluation and high credibility.
- Consistently save and organize your research findings, including full text and citation details, using database features, manual tracking, or citation management tools.

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

*Answer these before moving on. Model answers are in the Answer Key at the back of this guide.*

1. How can you effectively locate streaming videos relevant to your academic studies through your college library?
2. Explain the process of generating effective keywords from a research question.
3. Describe how Boolean operators and truncation improve your search results.
4. What is the primary difference between a peer-reviewed journal article and a magazine article, and why is this distinction important for academic research?
5. Why is it important to save your research findings consistently, and what methods can you use to do so?

## REFERENCE

# Glossary

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**Academic database**

A structured, searchable collection of scholarly articles, journals, books, and other research materials, often subscription-based.

**Background research**

Initial exploration of a topic to gain foundational knowledge, identify key terms, and refine a research question.

**Boolean operators**

Words (AND, OR, NOT) used to combine or exclude search terms, allowing for more precise control over search results.

**Call number**

A unique alphanumeric code assigned to a library item, indicating its subject and exact location on the shelves.

**Citation management tool**

Software (e.g., Zotero, Mendeley) designed to help researchers collect, organize, and cite sources, and generate bibliographies.

**Craap test**

An acronym representing Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose, used as a framework for critically evaluating information sources, especially websites.

**Ebook**

An electronic version of a printed book, accessible on computers or mobile devices.

**Full text**

The complete content of an article, book, or other publication, available for viewing or download.

**Keyword**

A significant word or concept from your research question used to search for information.

**Keywords**

Important words or concepts extracted from a research question, used as search terms to find relevant information.

**Library database**

A specialized, searchable collection of published academic articles, journals, books, and other resources, often requiring a subscription.

**Page 1+**

Conestoga Library's primary search tool, providing access to a wide range of library resources including books, articles, and media.

**Peer review**

A process where an article submitted for publication is evaluated by other experts in the same field to ensure quality, validity, and rigor.

**Phrase searching**

Using quotation marks around words to search for them as an exact phrase (e.g., "climate change").

**Popular source**

A publication written for a general audience, often found in magazines, newspapers, or general websites, intended for entertainment or broad information, usually without peer review.

**Primary source**

Original, firsthand information or evidence about an event, subject, or research finding, such as a diary, raw data, or an original research article.

**Research question**

A clear, focused, and answerable question that guides a research project.

**Scholarly journal**

A periodical publication containing articles written by experts for experts, presenting original research and undergoing peer review.

**Scholarly source**

An academic publication written by experts for other experts, typically peer-reviewed, containing original research or in-depth analysis, with extensive citations.

**Search filters**

Tools within a database that allow users to narrow down search results based on criteria like publication date, source type, or subject.

**Secondary source**

An analysis, interpretation, or discussion of primary sources, offering a second-hand account, such as a textbook, review article, or biography.

**Streaming video**

Digital video content delivered over the internet and played back in real-time without being fully downloaded.

**Truncation**

A search technique using a symbol (often an asterisk) at the end of a word root to find all variations of that word, such as 'child\*' finding 'child,' 'children,' and 'childhood.'

## REFERENCE

# Answer Key

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## Chapter 1: Getting Started with Library Research

### 1. What are the main types of online support offered by the Conestoga Library?

The Conestoga Library offers several online support options. These include live chat with a librarian for immediate assistance, email support for less urgent inquiries, and booking one-on-one research appointments for in-depth help. They also provide online workshops to develop specific research skills.

### 2. How do scholarly sources differ from popular sources, and why are scholarly sources preferred for academic research?

Scholarly sources are written by experts for an academic audience, undergo peer review, and include extensive citations, providing in-depth, credible information. Popular sources are for a general audience, often lack peer review and detailed citations, and aim to inform or entertain broadly. Scholarly sources are preferred for academic research due to their rigor, authority, and reliability.

### 3. When would you use a primary source versus a secondary source in your research?

You would use a primary source when you need original, firsthand evidence or data, such as for historical analysis, scientific experiments, or literary criticism. A secondary source is appropriate when you need an interpretation, analysis, or overview of a topic, often synthesizing information from multiple primary sources to provide context or a broader perspective.

### 4. Explain the purpose of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) in building a search strategy.

Boolean operators control how search terms are combined. AND narrows a search by requiring all connected terms to be present in results. OR broadens a search by finding results with any of the connected terms, useful for synonyms. NOT excludes specific terms, helping to refine results by removing irrelevant topics.

### 5. What is Page 1+ and what are two ways you can refine your search results within it?

Page 1+ is the Conestoga Library's main search tool, allowing you to search across a wide range of library resources like books, articles, and media simultaneously. You can refine your search results by using filters such as 'Source Type' (e.g., academic journals, books) and 'Publication Date.' You can also filter for 'Peer-Reviewed' status, which is crucial for academic assignments.

## Chapter 2: Preparing for Effective Research

### 1. Why is it recommended to start research at the library rather than with a general web search?

Libraries provide access to curated, reliable information not freely available online, such as subscription databases containing millions of scholarly articles. Librarians also offer expert guidance, helping students navigate complex research challenges and find appropriate resources efficiently.

### 2. What is the purpose of defining a research question, and how does a focused question differ from a broad one?

Defining a research question provides direction for your entire project, preventing aimless searching. A focused question is specific and answerable, like "What mitigation strategies have Saskatchewan farmers adopted to address climate change on wheat yields between 2010 and 2020?" A broad question, such as "What are the effects of climate change?", is too vast and yields overwhelming, unfocused results.

**3. Describe two common search filters in library databases and explain how they help refine results.**

The "Publication Date" filter allows you to limit results to a specific timeframe, useful for current topics or historical research. The "Source Type" filter lets you specify resource formats, such as "Scholarly Journals" or "Books," which is crucial for meeting academic assignment requirements. Both filters reduce the number of irrelevant results, making your search more efficient.

**4. What are the key characteristics of a scholarly (peer-reviewed) journal article, and when should you prioritize using them?**

Scholarly journal articles are written by experts for experts, present original research, and undergo a rigorous peer review process for quality assurance. They include extensive citations. You should prioritize them for academic papers, literature reviews, and when you require authoritative, in-depth information based on robust research.

**5. When evaluating a website for academic use, what does the "Authority" criterion of the CRAAP Test refer to?**

The "Authority" criterion refers to the credibility of the author or publisher of the website. It asks about their credentials, expertise, and any affiliations with reputable organizations. A website from a government (.gov) or educational institution (.edu) typically holds more authority than a personal blog or a commercial site.

### **Chapter 3: Research Fundamentals: Finding and Searching**

**1. Why are academic databases generally preferred over general web search engines for scholarly research?**

Academic databases provide access to peer-reviewed, scholarly content that has been vetted for quality and accuracy. They offer advanced search features specific to academic research and contain a vast amount of information not freely accessible on the open web, ensuring more reliable and relevant results.

**2. Explain how using quotation marks in a search query changes the results compared to not using them. Provide an example.**

Quotation marks instruct the database to search for an exact phrase, treating the words as a single unit. Without quotes, the database searches for each word individually, allowing them to appear anywhere in the document. For example, searching "climate change" will only find documents with that exact phrase, while climate change will find documents containing both "climate" and "change" separately.

**3. You are researching "the effects of social media on adolescent mental health." Construct a search string using keywords, a phrase, truncation, and at least two Boolean**

**operators.**

An effective search string could be: ("social media" OR Facebook OR Instagram) AND (adolescent\* OR teen\*) AND ("mental health" OR well-being OR anxiety). This combines synonyms, uses exact phrases, and applies truncation to broaden the search for age groups.

**4. Describe the purpose of a library call number and how you would use it to find a book in a physical library.**

A library call number is a unique code that identifies a book's subject and its precise location on the library shelves. To use it, you first find the call number in the library catalog. Then, you navigate to the correct section of the library, often organized by the first letters or numbers of the call number, and locate the book by matching the full call number on the spine.

**5. What should you do if a database search result indicates an article is relevant, but there is no direct "PDF" or "HTML Full Text" link immediately visible?**

Look for a "Find It" button or similar link, which often uses an OpenURL resolver to check if the article is available through another database or the library's other subscriptions. If still unavailable, you should use the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) service to request the article from another library.

**Chapter 4: Applying Research Skills and Managing Information****1. How can you effectively locate streaming videos relevant to your academic studies through your college library?**

Start by visiting your college library's website and looking for sections like "Databases" or "Streaming Video." Navigate to academic video platforms such as Kanopy or NFB Campus, then use their internal search functions and filters to find specific titles or subjects.

**2. Explain the process of generating effective keywords from a research question.**

First, break your research question into its main concepts. Then, for each concept, brainstorm a list of synonyms, related terms, and broader or narrower terms. This comprehensive list helps you account for different terminology used by authors.

**3. Describe how Boolean operators and truncation improve your search results.**

Boolean operators like AND, OR, and NOT connect keywords to either narrow (AND) or broaden (OR) your search, or to exclude terms (NOT). Truncation, using a symbol like an asterisk, finds variations of a word stem, capturing more relevant results with a single search term.

**4. What is the primary difference between a peer-reviewed journal article and a magazine article, and why is this distinction important for academic research?**

Peer-reviewed journal articles undergo rigorous evaluation by independent experts before publication, ensuring scholarly rigor and credibility. Magazine articles are typically reviewed only by editors. This distinction is crucial because academic research requires highly credible, vetted sources, making peer-reviewed journals the preferred choice.

**5. Why is it important to save your research findings consistently, and what methods can you use to do so?**

Saving research consistently prevents lost work, streamlines the citation process, and ensures easy retrieval of information. Methods include using database "Save to Folder" or "Export" features,

maintaining a manual tracking spreadsheet, or utilizing citation management tools like Zotero or Mendeley.

## CLOSING

## Where to Go Next

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Upon completing "Library Research Skills," you will possess a robust toolkit for effective information retrieval and evaluation. The most important next step is to apply these skills consistently. Integrate your new knowledge into your academic assignments, professional projects, or personal inquiries. Practice is key to solidifying your understanding.

Consider applying your refined search strategies to a topic of personal interest. Experiment with different databases and citation styles. The more you use these techniques, the more intuitive they will become. You might also explore more specialized research methods or advanced database features relevant to your specific field of study or work.

Subjects that naturally follow this course include advanced academic writing, data analysis, or specific training in specialized research software. Continue to seek out opportunities to refine your critical thinking and information literacy. These skills are continuously valuable throughout your educational and professional life.



### MEGACOURSE

*Learn Anything. Achieve Everything.*

Track your progress, take the quizzes, and earn your certificate for this course at  
**[megacourse.app/courses/library-research-skills](https://megacourse.app/courses/library-research-skills)**