Library How-To:

Search for Articles & More in the Library Catalog.

The library catalog provides a way to easily search for books, media, articles, and other sources using a simple ‘Google-like’ search box. This is known as ‘basic’ or ‘keyword’ searching. Using this method, you will need to give some thought to how broad or specific you should be with your choice of search terms. Additionally, in order to find sources that best meet the needs of your assignment, you will need to take steps to narrow your search.

To focus your ‘basic search’ on articles, rather than books and media, follow these simple steps:

1. From the library home page (http://www.eastfieldcollege.edu/library), click on ‘Books, Media and More (Catalog)’ under the ‘Find’ heading:

Once you are directed to the library catalog, you will need to change the ‘search scope’ setting using the drop-down box to the right of the search bar:

Select the ‘Articles and More’ option to focus your search.

Notice that there are other ‘search scope’ options. You can also begin your search by selecting the ‘ALL’ option. If you do this, your search will include ALL library resources, both print and online. This is a useful feature but if selected, extra attention will have to be paid to how you narrow your results.
For most basic keywords your search will return far too many results for you to be able to accurately find sources relevant to specific aspects of your topic. Notice, below, that our search for ‘global warming’ returned over 100,000 results.

2. There are a few simple ways we can narrow our search. For one, since many college-level research assignments require the use of ‘peer reviewed’ or ‘scholarly’ sources, we can narrow our search to include only articles that meet that criteria. On the left side of the results page, go to the section that says ‘Show Only’ and click on the checkbox for ‘Peer-Reviewed Journals’ — for more info on the differences between ‘scholarly’ or ‘peer reviewed’ sources and popular sources, see this infographic.

By limiting our search to only scholarly journals, we eliminated over half of the results!

136,069 results is still a lot more than we need—and there are a few more ways for us to narrow our search.
3. Many college-level research assignments will also require you to find only recently published sources. (e.g. from the last ten years) Take a look at the facets on the left side of the screen again. Notice the ‘Publication Date’ section. For our topic, the oldest search result is from 1800!

![Publication Date](image)

Since global warming is a very current issue, we will want to use only the most recent scholarship. It is safe to assume that something written in 1800 is not going to work! In order to get only results published in the last ten (or so) years, we can change the ‘from’ date to 2007.

![Publication Date](image)

Just changing the publication date got rid of thousands of irrelevant articles:
4. Even though we have reduced our search results by more than half, we may find that our search was still too broad for our needs. In order to get more relevant results, we should be more specific with the search terms we use. This can be done by simply adding terms to the search box at the top of the results screen. Perhaps we want to focus more specifically on the causes of global warming.

**NOTE:** adding an additional keyword to your search will wipe out any filters that you've applied to your search, this means that you will need to click on ‘Peer-Reviewed Journals’ again as well as changing the publication dates.

Just adding one additional keyword and reapplying the filters has greatly reduced the number of search results:

Since 36,675 articles is still a lot to go through, we may try adding even more keywords to zero in on a specific cause of global warming. Perhaps we want to search specifically for ‘human’ or ‘anthropogenic’ causes of global warming. For every search term you use, it helps to know a few alternate terms with the same meaning. You may also want to explore the other facets for limiting your search on the left side of the results screen. You can limit your search based on a number of additional factors, from format to subject, language and more. This helps us to broaden and narrow our results depending on our needs.

After you’ve spent some time refining your search, you should begin to see articles that more accurately meet the needs of your assignment. At this point, you’ll want to learn more about the articles and how to access and/or cite them.
5. Once you have identified an article that you wish to use, you can click on the title to learn more about it. This will direct you to a record screen like the one in the example below:

**Things to keep in mind:**

- Basic searching will only get you so far. To learn how to employ a more accurate search strategy, see the how-to guide on Advanced Searching.
- *If at first you don’t succeed*... Searching for information is a process of trial and error. Remember that your first search will rarely lead to the best results.
- If you need help, always ask a librarian!