Identify Keywords
Create a list of keywords associated with your topic; consider synonyms or variant spellings. Write them down and keep them with you throughout the research process.

Write down your research question. Example: What’s the role of race in Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice?

Write down the important words from your topic. Simple search: race Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice

Exact Phrase Searching
To look for an exact phrase, type your phrase within quotation marks (“ ”). The results will contain the exact words in the quotation marks. This will NARROW & DECREASE search results.

Much better simple search: race Shakespeare “The Merchant of Venice”

Synonyms and related words
Write down synonyms or related words from your list. Examples: race, prejudice, anti-Semitism

Use OR to retrieve resources that contain at least one of these words. This will BROADEN & INCREASE search results.

Advanced search: (race OR prejudice OR “anti-Semitism”) (Shakespeare) (“The Merchant of Venice”)

Truncation
Use an asterisk (*) at the end of a root word (also known as truncation or stemming) to retrieve results containing any form of the root word. This will BROADEN & INCREASE search results.

Example: typing rac* will find race, racism, racist, racists, racial

Note: Most databases use the asterisk (*) as the truncation symbol, but check the Help screen of a database if needed

Better advanced search: (rac* OR prejudice* OR “anti-Semitism”) (Shakespeare) (“The Merchant of Venice”)

Filtering / Limiting
Use the tools to the side of the results to NARROW & DECREASE your results. For example, you can narrow by:

- **Date**, if you want only recent materials.
- **Discipline**, if you want materials published by a particular academic field.
- **Type**, if you want only materials of a particular type, such as scholarly peer-reviewed articles.

Full Text
To get the full text of an article,

1. Look around the page for the full text (ideally a .pdf). If you don’t see the full text, instead...
2. Look for a button labeled “get it from UNCW;” this button will automatically search Randall Library’s hundreds of databases. If the full text is still not found, instead...
3. Request from **interlibrary loan**, either via a button (if offered) or by going to **library.uncw.edu/ill**.