

Transcript: Thesaurus searching

I am going to demonstrate an additional feature of searching bibliographic databases, which is the thesaurus tool.

This technique is useful when you aren't finding enough results with your search.

Each article in a database is tagged with these subject tags which describe what it is about, even if they don't appear in the title or abstract.

These tags are arranged in a hierarchy with narrower and broader terms, and you can explore this hierarchy using the Thesaurus tool.

The example I will use is searching for cyberbullying and dyscalculia, a form of dyslexia, which applies to numbers. I will be searching in the Education Collection. This collection of articles contains the key education database, ERIC: the Education Resources Information Center.

At first when I search I'm only getting two results, not enough for a literature review.

If I go back to modify search, I can see the option thesaurus here.

If I'm not sure which of my search terms is causing the problem, I could search for each separately and see which gets fewer results.

In this case, I know there will be lots of articles about cyberbullying.

I click Thesaurus and search for dyscalculia

I click on the word and it brings up a broader term, learning disabilities

It says "use for – dyscalculia". This means that articles which are about dyscalculia will be tagged with the subject tag "learning disabilities".

Clicking the notes symbol also brings up related terms, which I might also want to search for.

I can tick the boxes of those I want to add to my search.

Tickling explode will automatically add any narrower terms as well.

Learning disabilities doesn't have any narrower terms, but if I was choosing disabilities, I could choose explode to add all of these to my search at once.

When I'm happy with the terms I want to add to my search, I click Add to search.

Now my search includes these codes saying MAINSUBJECT – this is telling the database to look in the subject tags for these phrases.

When I run my search I now get more results coming up.

You may not find all of your keywords in the thesaurus – possibly only one or two will come up.

Usually you will do a mixture of searching with your own keywords and searching the subject tags – you'll need to play around with your searches until you're happy with the number and quality of results you get.

Thank you for watching.