

Define Search Terms

Find synonyms, broader & narrower terms

Use broader or narrower terms (e.g. natural disaster → earthquake, tsunami; global warming → climate change).

Attention: the field you search in a database will affect the number of results you retrieve (e.g., searching in *all fields* vs. *title/abstract*)

Truncation & Wildcards

Truncation (**alternative word endings**) & Wildcards (symbols for handling **variant spellings**) account for other forms of a word (e.g., different spelling, singular or plural forms). For example: surg* will find surgery, surgeries, surgeon or surgical; wom*n accounts for woman and women

→ Check the database help section to see which symbols are used (e.g., ?, #, *)

Exact phrases

Use quotation marks “” to search for exact phrases.

For example, searching for *spice girls* finds the words *spice* and *girls* separately, while searching for “Spice Girls” returns only results with this exact phrase and will not return results about cinnamon or oregano.

Where to search

You can find lib guides from the UZH at www.ub.uzh.ch > Subjects & Support > Subjects, where you can find lists of *information resources* according to subject area. These include for example

Literature Databases

For example, *Web of Science*, *Scopus* or *OpenAlex* are multidisciplinary databases for scientific literature.

Academic Search Engines

Use for example *Google Scholar* or *BASE* to search across scholarly literature. These are broader but less controlled compared to literature databases.



Patent Databases

You can search these to find published patent applications and granted patents.

Newspaper archives

These contain searchable digitized or preserved past newspaper issues.

Subject/Special Databases

These are specialized to find information focused on one particular subject area or research field.



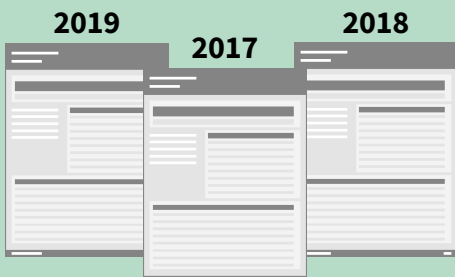
TIP: Accessing these databases/archives via the links at ub.uzh.ch works best, because you often need a proxy connection

IMPORTANT: You may need to adjust your search for each database, as truncation, wildcard, and Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) can vary.

Citation Chaining

Citation chaining is a research strategy that helps you find sources that cite each other.

Backward searching means checking the reference list of an article that fits well with your topic to find earlier, foundational or classic sources related to your topic.

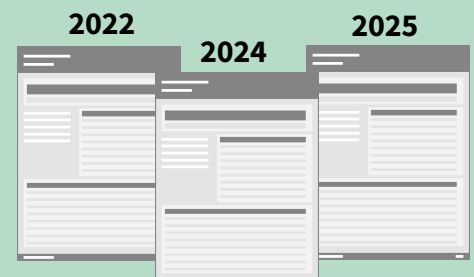


2020



chosen article

Forward searching (also called cited reference searching) means finding newer publications that cite your chosen article to discover more recent relevant research.



Too many results

Have you combined your terms correctly (AND, OR)?
Did you search exact phrases where necessary?
Are you searching an appropriate database?
Are your synonyms focused enough?
→ Filter for example by date, country/area or document type.

Improving your search

Not enough results

Are you using the correct truncation/wildcard symbols for this database?
Are you searching with too many concepts or being too specific?
Are there any spelling mistakes?
Have you included enough synonyms and correct terminology?

Results not relevant

Have you truncated too early (E.g., cat* for cats might yield catapult, catastrophe or category) or did you search for ambiguous terms (homonyms)? E.g., *train* can be a *mode of transport* or *to teach*



You will have to adapt the search as you go and in different databases!

Reference management

Use a reference management software to collect, organize and store references. These will help you to easily integrate references into texts and create bibliographies with one click. **Zotero** is a good option that is free and can be used for Windows, Mac and Linux.

IMPORTANT: Make sure that the imported reference is correct! Depending on the source, the item type may be wrong (e.g., it says website instead of newspaper article), or other information such as volume or issue number of a journal may be missing after import.