

# Basic Library Research

- **Pre-research**
  - **Find background information on your topic**
  - Determine the information requirements for your assignment or project
- **Build the question**
  - What do you want to say about your topic?
- **Analyze the question**
- **Conduct the search**
- **Evaluate results**

# Basic Library Research

## Where can you find background information?

- **Professors**
  - Recommended sources?
  - Recommended subtopics?
- **Textbooks**
  - Background information on your topic?
  - Bibliographies or additional readings?
- **Assignments/syllabi**
  - Guidelines or specifics for your assignment?
- **Classmates**
  - How are they approaching their topics?
- ◆ **Librarians**
  - Recommend research strategies?
  - Recommend specific reference books?
  - Construct database searches?
  - Locate resources?

# Basic Library Research

Gathering background information

Can you talk about your topic for at least  
one minute  
before you begin your research?



**No?**

Then you need:

## ◆ Reference collection

–Subject specific

- Encyclopedias
- Dictionaries
- Handbooks
- Guides
- Bibliographies
- Directories

Or

## ◆ Periodicals collection

–Subject specific

- Magazines
- Journals
- Newspapers

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# Basic Library Research:

## What kind of information is required for your assignment?

- **What type of assignment?**
  - Essay, report, research paper, oral presentation
- **How much information do you need?**
  - an article
  - a few books
  - articles and books
- **Do you need particular information formats?**
  - statistics
  - facts
  - definitions
  - opinions/editorials
- **Do you need information from a certain type of publication?**
  - journals
  - magazines
  - newspapers
  - government publications
- **Do you need information from a certain time period?**
  - Current news sources, scientific journals, etc.
  - Older articles, historical perspective

# Basic Library Research

What kind of periodical articles do you need to meet the requirements of your assignment? This will help determine what databases to you need to search

	Popular	Scholarly
Audience	General public	Scholars/experts/students
Authors	Reporters	Scholars/experts
Refereed/peer reviewed	No	Yes
Color pictures	Many	Few
Advertisements	Many	Few
Article length	1 – 5 pages	10+ pages
Article titles	Short & catchy	Long & descriptive
Cites sources	No	Yes

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# Basic Library Research

What question do you want to answer through your research?

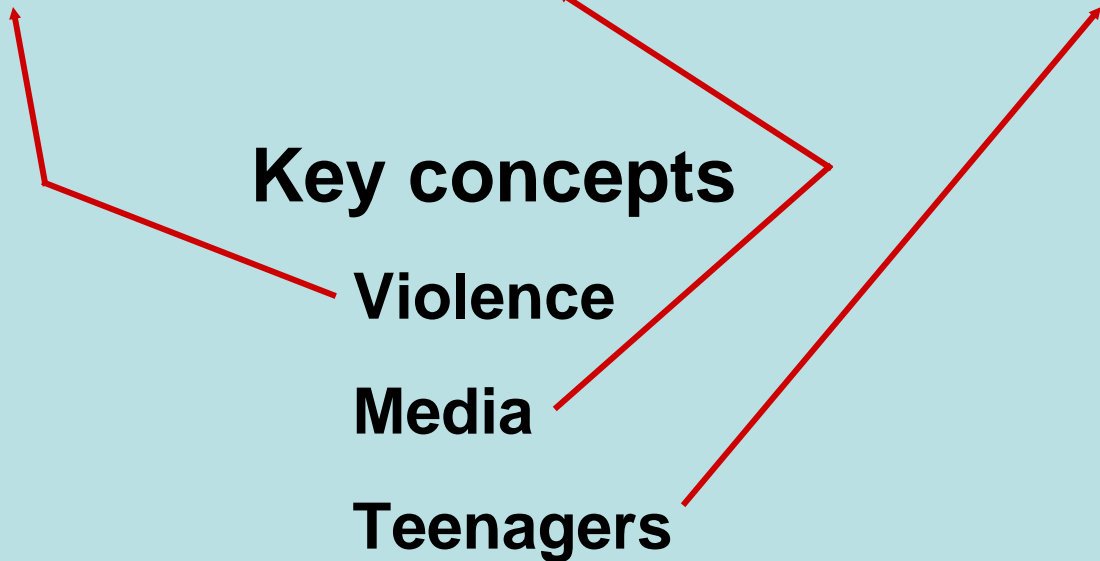
**Does violence in the media really affect teenagers?**

**Key concepts**

**Violence**

**Media**

**Teenagers**



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# Basic Library Research

Analyze your question, finding different ways to express key concepts

## **MEDIA**

Television

Movies

Music

Video games

## **TEENAGERS**

Youth

Adolescents

Teens

Kids

Think of all the words that could express your key concepts in order to maximize the number of key words you can use in your search.

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- Analyze the question

- **Conduct the search** 

## Question

Where do I find the information I need?  
In books or articles or.....  
Ask for help if not sure!

- Evaluate results

# Basic Library Research

## Using Library Databases and search terms to find information– the “AND” search

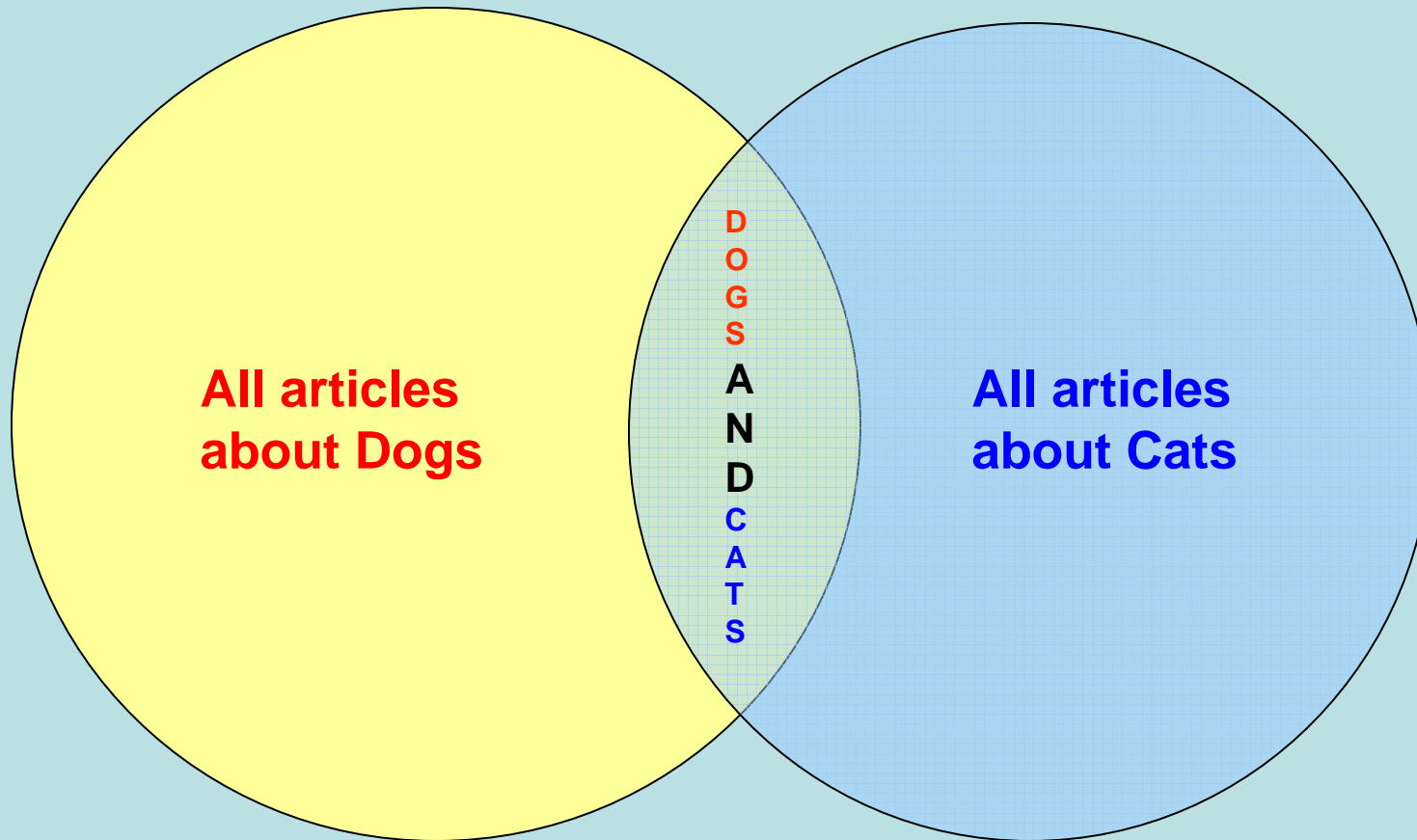
When you use the search operator “**AND**” in a database search, you are asking for records in the database where any of the fields contain **ALL** the search words you listed. “Dogs **AND** Cats” means only records with BOTH “Dogs” **and** “Cats” appear in the records’ fields.

# AND

Using “**AND**” will narrow your search (decrease your results) over a search in which you used “OR” as your search direction.

# Basic Library Research

An “AND” search for “dogs AND cats”



# Basic Library research

## Using search words in fields – the “OR” search

When you use the search operator “**OR**” in a database search, you are asking for records in the database where any of the fields contain **ANY** of the search words you listed. “Dogs **OR** Cats” means records with **EITHER** of the words “Dogs” **or** “Cats” somewhere in the records’ fields.

# OR

Using “**OR**” will expand your search (increase your results) over a search in which you used “**AND**” as your search direction.

# Basic Library Research

An “OR” search for “dogs OR cats”



**All articles about DOGS OR CATS**

# Basic Library Research

Create a database search to answer  
your research question . . .

To answer the question . . .

**Does violence in the media really affect teenagers?**

. . . we could search for articles in a database  
where the key words below appear in the  
article record . . .

**(teen\* or adolescents) and violence and television**

The more key search terms we use, the more focused  
the search will be on the question we are trying to  
answer.

See “Using Databases” for additional information  
about choosing a database and conducting a search.

# Research Help

The librarians at the Reference Desk (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), the Curriculum Center (1<sup>st</sup> floor) and the Archives/Special Collections (4<sup>th</sup> floor) are ready to provide in-depth, expert assistance with all aspects of research at Smith Library. Walk up or call - we're there to help you.

Many of your instructors will arrange for your class to have an introduction to the Library and the databases which is designed to help you be successful at the Library. You could even ask them to arrange for a session if they haven't done so.

If you're adventurous, you will find each database has extensive help available online.

**If you are having trouble establishing your Library PIN, come to or call the Circulation Desk Supervisor at 465-4465 for help.**

**If you are having trouble using a Library database, come to or call the Reference Desk at 465-4699 for help.**