

welcome to your Saskatchewan e-library services and resources



## Basic Search Techniques

### 1. Broad to narrow

- Good for beginning a search when it is unknown what type of material is available, or unsure where to begin on a topic
- begin searching with one broad topic ex) Railways, tourism, Canada
- use subjects, titles, authors, etc. from returned results to narrow your search
- **Pros:** will result in many returns on a single theme
- **Cons:** may return too many results to search

### 2. Narrow to broad

- Good for searching unique topics or when a specific item, author, etc. is desired
- start with several very specific subjects, authors, titles, keywords ex) *Castles of the North*, Hotels in Canada
- adjust backwards to less specific if no results are returned or try adding another search technique (see below).
- **Pros:** will find a specific item or subject quickly
- **Cons:** will not provide broad coverage of the topic, may not return any results

### 3. Try synonyms and/or plurals

- ex) Cooking, cookery, cuisine, recipes

### 4. Boolean (and, or, not)

- And: includes multiple fields ex) Chrisholm, Barbara AND *Castles of the North*
- Or: search for either one subject or the other ex) baseball OR softball
- Not: Excludes one topic from searching ex) composers NOT classical
- Combination: Eisenhower AND President NOT General
- **Pros:** provides more control over results, can combine searches
- **Cons:** can provide too many results or not enough

## 5. Related subjects

- First conduct a broad search and locate an item on a particular topic
- Use the subject indicators to narrow or expand your search
- Ex) search for Berton, *Vimy* will reveal subject expansion to World War, 1914-1918 – Participation, Canadian
- **Pros:** offers several other related subject searches and the potential for search expansion
- **Cons:** must find an item already on the topic

## 6. Saskatchewan Libraries: Ask Us!

- Still can't find what you're looking for? Ask Us! is an online question and answer service where you can ask any question via e-mail, and a librarian will find the answer for you.  
Find this service at: <http://www.lib.sk.ca/askus/>

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