

## Searching with Subject Terms

Using Subject Terms when searching the Library databases ([Databases A-Z](#)) will help you narrow your results and find relevant articles on your topic. In the library databases, Subject Terms may also be referred to as **Topics** or **Descriptors**, and are sometimes located in a database's **thesaurus**. All of these are referring to the same thing: **Controlled Vocabulary**.

See how different databases refer to Subject Terms:



### What Does “Controlled Vocabulary” Mean?

In a nutshell, Controlled Vocabulary is a system of assigning one term to represent multiple related terms:

Controlled Vocabulary Term	Related/Synonymous Terms
Off-white	Beige, vanilla, cream, eggshell, taupe, linen, antique white, ecru

Each article or book in the library databases is assigned several Controlled Vocabulary terms that describe the subject matter of the article. Controlled Vocabulary ensures that one definitive term is used to represent a concept, thus allowing more precision. This lessens the need to use multiple related keywords in a search.

## How Can Controlled Vocabulary Improve Database Searching?

You can use Controlled Vocabulary in two ways:

### 1. Find the proper subject terms and use them in search.

**Step 1:** Find proper subject terms.

- 1) Click **Subject Terms**.
- 2) Type your keywords or phrases in the **Browse for** search box.
- 3) Choose one of the options below the search box, e.g. "Relevancy Ranked."
- 4) Click **Browse** and view your results.

EBSCO Research Databases

Basic Search | **Advanced Search** | Visual Search | Choose Databases

New Search | **Keyword** | Publications | **Subject Terms** | Cited References | Indexes | Images

Database: Academic Search Premier

Find:  Search Clear

Subjects | Places | People

Page: Previous | [Next](#)

Browse for:  Browse

Term Begins With  Term Contains  Relevancy Ranked

Select term, then add to search using:

(Click term to display details.)

[EDUCATIONAL leadership](#)

**Step 2:** Use them in search.

EBSCO Research Databases

Basic Search | **Advanced Search** | Visual Search | Choose Databases

New Search | **Keyword** | Publications | **Subject Terms** | Cited References | Indexes | Images

Find:  in  Search

and  in

and  in  [Add Row](#)

## 2. Narrow your search results

The screenshot displays the EBSCO Research Databases search interface. At the top, there are navigation buttons for 'Basic Search', 'Advanced Search', 'Visual Search', and 'Choose Databases'. Below these, a search bar contains the query 'educational leadership' and is set to search in 'SU Subject Terms'. The search results show 'All Results: 1-10 of 1652' and a list of results. A sidebar on the left, titled 'Narrow Results by Subject', lists various subject categories such as 'EDUCATIONAL leadership', 'UNITED States', 'SCHOOL management & organization', 'EDUCATION -- United States', 'SCHOOL administrators', 'EDUCATION, Higher', and 'COMMUNITY colleges'. A callout box with a black border and white background contains the text 'Click on additional subject terms to narrow your search.' with red arrows pointing to the subject categories in the sidebar. The search results list includes items like '1. School leadership: the last ten years. By: Dunford, John. Ed. PDF Full Text (31K)' and '3. The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Pract... 27087210) PDF Full Text (147K)'.