Reading a Database

Although databases can vary greatly in their appearance, subject matter, and search interface, every new database that you encounter should have some common search elements. When using a new database for the first time, look for these common elements to help you navigate the database's resources.

About

Every database should offer an "About" section that describes the database's content, subject matter, specialized research resources, etc. This section will give you a good idea of whether or not this database will be useful in your research.

Basic and Advanced Search

In addition to a basic search function, databases also offer advanced search tools. There may be an advanced search link near the main search bar, or on the results page. An advanced search will allow you to:

- Add additional search terms
- Search in a specific field (Title, Author, Abstract, etc.)
- Locate specific types of resources (journals, reports, books, etc.)
- Specify a year, date range, or journal publication

Search Filters

Every database provides filters to help researchers refine their search results and get more precise and relevant results. Look for the following filters on your search results page:

- **Full Text**: access to the complete text of books, articles, dissertations, etc. If you don't see the terms "full text," look for:
  - "Read and Download"
  - "Available"
  - "Access Type"
- **Scholarly or Peer-Reviewed**: access to scholarly and academic content only
- **Language**: limit to resources that are written in a specific language
- **Content Type**:
  - Books
  - Journals
  - Magazines
  - Newspapers
  - Reports, etc.

Specialized Features

Keep an eye out for any specialized research tools that a database provides. For example, some business databases may have a special search function to locate company profiles. Other databases may have a thesaurus to help you find more precise search terminology. You can often find these research tools in a main toolbar near the top of the page, or on the database's landing page. Keep an eye out for any of the following:

- Thesaurus
- Subject Terms
- Industry Reports
- Company Profiles
- Browse features