

Introduction to Using ERIC @ UNCG

Hi, my name is Liane and I'm going to be showing you how to search in ERIC.

ERIC is an excellent education database that has popular and scholarly articles, school system reports, conference papers, and a variety of other educational materials. In this tutorial we'll just be locating journal articles. Let's start from the UNCG Libraries' home page and go to Databases. From here, just click on the starting letter "E," then scroll down until you see ERIC. Click on this link. At this point, if you're off campus, you'll get a log-in screen. Log-in with the same username and password that you use for your iSpartan email.

The search screen is going to look very familiar for a lot of the database that you can use through UNCG, but you can always look in the upper left hand corner of the screen and make sure you're in the one you want. I'm going to be looking for information about critical race theory in K-12 schools and in particular on racial discrimination. By searching for "critical race theory" I'll find several hundred articles. That's a lot of articles to look through! To start narrowing down my search, I want to identify just the portion of those articles that deal with K-12 schools.

On the left side of the screen, let's click on "Subject." The first part of the list shows the major sub-topics of critical race theory. Let's check the box "elementary secondary education," then click "Update." If we want, we can use the same process to narrow the search again, for example, we might choose "equal education."

Alternatively, I'm going to use the Thesaurus. This thesaurus is specific to ERIC, so it's going to help me make sure that I'm using the correct terms for the field of education, and it may show me some terms that I didn't think of. For racial discrimination, let's click on that link to see other related terms. I think "educational discrimination," "equal education," and "racial bias" are good synonyms for my research topic. And of course, let's check the box for "racial discrimination." Not that the default setting will combine those terms using "OR." I need just one racial discrimination term in each article, not articles that have ALL FOUR of those terms. I'll click "Add" to put those in my search box, then click "Search."

Remember the search we just did for critical race theory? Every search we have done so far in this session is listed under "Search History" and every search is assigned a SearchID# that is an "S" number. To combine these we'll check the boxes of the two line numbers, then click on "Search with AND." Now we have materials on critical race theory in K-12 schools that deal with race discrimination.

This Venn diagram represents the process for finding items which cover all three topics. See how that search is coming together? We relate the similar terms or synonyms using “OR,” and combine the different concepts using “AND.” Any item that has at least one term from each circle will show up in my search results. But—we aren’t done yet.

We want only journal articles. From the left side bar, I can specify that I want only articles that have been peer-reviewed. Another option is to narrow by publication date. The date slider bar is used to limit to things published since, let’s say, 2003.

So, how does this search turn out? If we skim down the titles, they look pretty close to that I wanted to find. Anything around a hundred or [fewer] is usually a pretty good number of search results to get, but it’s more important that the results are useful to you. If they’re not, you’re going to want to go back and adjust your search terms, maybe take some out, maybe add more, it depends on what you find you need at this point. Check the articles you like for different search terms. Do an author search for people who are writing on your topic.

I want to make sure you know how to get the actual article, too. This one looks good, based on the title. If I go into it, I can look at the abstract... okay, that sounds useful. For this one, I can just open the PDF from this link. I can save the file if I’m on my own computer, or email myself the article information. I could also add several articles to a temporary folder, and then email myself all of that information at once. Sometimes you will see “Check for Full Text.” That sends you through the library catalog, and this one sends us right to the article. In this case, you’re going to want to just save the .pdf.

If you ever get stuck accessing an article, or if you have any other questions about ERIC, you can always Ask Us!

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