

## Keyword Searching vs. Subject Searching

Are you wondering which option to choose in the library catalog and databases? These search tips will help you to get relevant results from library databases and catalogs.

### What's the difference?

Here are some key differences between keyword searching and subject searching:

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>vs.</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Natural language words describing your topic. A good way to start your search.		Pre-defined "controlled vocabulary" words assigned to describe the content of each item in a database or catalog.
More flexible for searching. You can combine terms in any number of ways.		Less flexible. You must know the exact controlled vocabulary term or phrase.
Database looks for keywords anywhere in the record (title, author name, subject headings, etc.).		Database looks for subjects only in the subject heading or descriptor field, where the most relevant words appear.
Often yields too many or too few results.		If a subject heading search yields too many results, you can often select subheadings to focus on one aspect of the broader subject.
Often yields many irrelevant results.		Results are usually very relevant to the topic.