

## Exploring Library Databases

### Learning goal

This activity allows students to explore databases together and practice using different database features. Students will also reflect on how databases are useful and why they might need to use a specific database for their research.

### Time

This activity can take anywhere from 15 to 25 minutes, depending on how much time you want to give students to explore a database and share their experience.

### Materials

- Students will need laptops or a device to access the UT Libraries' website (<https://lib.utk.edu>)
- In an online class, students can post observations asynchronously on a discussion board or a discussion tool like Padlet (<https://padlet.com>)

### Instructions

See the next pages for an example of what this activity could look like with an article and non-article database.

1. Choose a number of databases for students to explore. Three or four is often a good number, depending on how many students are in the class and what's useful for your specific context.
2. Divide students into groups. Give each group a database to explore. Students can access databases from the [Articles & Databases page](#) on the library website. If not on campus, students will need to log in with their net-ID and password.
3. Give students 10 minutes to explore the databases in their groups. You can give them more or less time as necessary.
4. As students are exploring the databases, they can answer these questions:
  - a. What's a feature of this database that you like?
  - b. What's something about this database that could be challenging?
  - c. How might this database be useful for your research?
5. After students have explored the database, ask them to share what they learned and their experiences using the database.
  - a. This will take between 10 and 15 minutes depending on what you ask students to share and how many groups you have.

## Example with an article database -- ERIC

This is an example of what the activity could look like with an article database, like ERIC. This Education database looks and functions like any database that you might use to find a journal article. Databases like this one are good options for students to explore if they need articles for an assignment, if they're learning about disciplinary research, or if they are new to research in general. Check out the library's Articles and Databases page (<https://libguides.utk.edu/databases>) for other databases by discipline. ERIC is listed under Most Popular Databases as well as under the General Topics and Education subjects.

For the activity, students should type in keywords and see a results page. You can have all groups use the same keywords, or you can have groups use their own keywords. As they explore, students might notice the number of results, the filters they can use to narrow their results, the embedded chat box, or how to access articles.

The screenshot shows the EBSCOhost search interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'New Search', 'Thesaurus', and 'Indexes'. The search bar contains the query 'student learning AND motivation'. Below the search bar, there are options to 'Select a Field (optional)' and a 'Search' button. The results page shows 'Search Results: 1 - 50 of 8,815'. The first three results are listed, each with a title, author information, and subject terms. The first result is 'The Effects of Problem Posing Learning Model on Students' Learning Achievement and Motivation' by Christidamayani, Agatha Puri; Kristanto, Yosep Dwi. The second result is 'College Students' Perceptions of Pleasure in Learning -- Designing Gameful Gamification in Education' by A, Gulinna; Lee, Youngjin. The third result is 'Priming Urban Learners' Attitudes toward the Relevancy of Science: A Mixed-Methods Study Testing the Importance of Context' by Boda, Phillip A.; Brown, Bryan. On the left side, there is a 'Refine Results' panel with options to 'Limit To' (Full Text, Peer Reviewed, IES Funded) and 'Source Types' (All Results, Reports, Academic Journals, ERIC Documents, Dissertations, Books). On the right side, there is a 'LibChat' widget for asking questions.

## Example with a non-article database -- PolicyMap

This is an example of what the activity could look like with a non-article database, like PolicyMap. This database looks and functions a little differently because it focuses on data, not articles, as content. Databases like this one are a good option for students to explore if they need to find sources other than books or articles. Check out the library's Articles and Databases page (<https://libguides.utk.edu/databases>) for other databases by source type. PolicyMap is listed under the Statistical Data source type.

For the activity, students can type in a word or phrase that matches the kind of content they're looking for. For example, PolicyMap visualizes data, so students will need to search for some kind of data. They might notice the different options for viewing data, the map visualizations, the ability to view different data points at once, and the data categories near the top of the page.

