

Transitioning to College: Helping You Succeed

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Transcript of *Talking to Databases*

Emily: How... does... advertising...impact... teen... smoking... question. This library stinks! I can't find anything.

Brian: Hey, Emily. Putting on the final touches on my project. What's the matter?

Emily: I need three articles for my research paper. My professor told me to start by searching on *Academic Search Premier*. And I've been looking all morning, but I can't find anything. Me and libraries just don't get along.

Brian: Is that the search you entered? You typed in: How does advertising impact teen smoking?

Brian: You can't talk to databases like that.

Emily: What do you mean?

Brian: Well, databases don't understand questions. Here. Let's write down your research question and go from there. Okay. What are the most important words or key terms in this research question?

Emily: Well, it's about advertising and teen smoking.

Brian: Right. *Advertising* is a key term, but you can also break down *teen smoking* into *teen* and *smoking*.

Emily: All right. Now what?

Brian: Well, these are the key terms that you search for. You type in these three words, and you connect them with the word *and*. The *and* will tell the database to look for articles that only include all three of these key terms.

Emily: Here goes nothing. Wow. Look at all of them. These are pretty good. There's plenty of articles to choose from now.

Brian: And I see that most of them include the



full text of the article.

Emily: You mean that I can print them off from right here?

Brian: Sure, or you can email them to yourself and print them out back at your dorm room.

Emily: Cool.

Brian: This search might have found the articles you need, but there's something else you might want to try.

Emily: What?

Brian: Take a look at the key terms again and ask yourself: Are there any synonyms or other words you can use to express those terms?

Emily: You mean like for *teens*, I might use *teenagers*.

Brian: Right. Or *adolescents* or *youth* or *young adults*.

Emily: Okay, how about for *smoking* we use *cigarettes*.

Brian: Great. Or *tobacco*.

Emily: How do you know which terms to use?

Brian: I usually start with the more formal and important sounding terms first. These are the terms that writers and researchers will use most often. Then, if I want, I try other searches using other terms. You have to work at it a little to see what is successful.

Emily: So, what do you think? Let's try searching *advertising*, *adolescents*, and *tobacco*.

Brian: That sounds good.

Emily: Cool. These are even better.

Brian: And there's even more of them, too.

Emily: Thanks a lot, Brian. I can't believe I was making this so hard.

Brian: No problem. And it will get easier, the more research you do. Now. Back to my own research project.