ADLT 601 – ERIC Search Examples
(Similar to the searches demonstrated in class)

Objective: Find research articles addressing learning theories as applied to adult learning.

1. USE THE ERIC.ed.gov THESAURUS TO CHECK AND DISCOVER SEARCH VOCABULARY

Check 'learning theories'

- Type **learning theories** into the search box; [NOTE: to search for variations of a term, type just the root, e.g., learning theor – do NOT add an asterisk (*)]
- Click on the term to expose any **Broader**, **Narrower**, or **Related** terms
- Read the **Scope Note**, if any [the entry for Learning Theories has none]
- Explore any of the terms on the list that are of interest to you. A number of them are in the Learning and Perception category. Click on the Learning and Perception link next to **Category**.
- Note that **Adult Learning** is in this category. Click on it to expose any **Broader**, **Narrower**, or **Related** terms.
- Keep the category list in mind as you move through your program. You will probably use many of these terms in future searches.
- To easily reach the categories, click **Browse Thesaurus**.
2. CONSTRUCT A SEARCH FOR ARTICLES
Use ERIC via ProQuest to Search for Articles Using the Checked / Discovered Vocabulary [Note: All the ProQuest databases (Social Services Abstracts, ABI/INFORM) are similar]
Be sure you are on the Advanced Search page.

1st line – “learning theor*”
2nd line – "adult learn*"

NOTE: Enclose phrases in quotation marks to hold them together. Use the * at the end of the word root to search for variations of the word, e.g., learner, learners, learning. BE CAREFUL, the usual limit of additional letters is 5.
Select peer reviewed to limit the results to articles in scholarly journals

There will be around 380+ results
Note the NARROW RESULTS choices on the left

Note the graph in the Publication Date section. This can sometimes indicate when a topic entered the literature or became important.

[NOTE for ABI/INFORM Collection only: Change the search type from Anywhere to Anywhere except full text. Your search will then be confined to citation, abstract, subject terms, and keywords.]

As you look through the results, you realize there are a number of articles discussing various theories. A broad search like this can often be very valuable in probing a topic for its characteristics, and sometimes providing the names of significant players in the field.

3. REVISING BASED ON RESULTS
You look through the abstracts of a number of articles, and open up several. Ultimately you decide to focus on experiential learning, so you modify your original search as follows:

Select Modify search just below the search box
1st line – “experiential learning”
Leave the 2nd line as it was, and keep the peer reviewed box checked.
There will be around 235+ results
Select DOCUMENT TYPE | Reports - Research
Now there will be about 65+ results

4. SEARCHING BY AUTHOR NAME
Change the search type from Anywhere to Author. Click on the Look up Authors link. Enter the name, e.g., Malcolm Knowles. Click the box in front of reasonable variations of the name, e.g., Knowles, Malcolm and Knowles, Malcolm S. Select Add to search, and then run the search.
ADLT 601

5. GENERAL ADVICE - EXAMINING AND EVALUATING ARTICLES
Click on PREVIEW to reveal the entire article abstract. Click on the title to reveal the entire record for the item.

Note the subjects used for the item. Note significant words used in the abstract. You may want to incorporate words you find into your searching. Note authors.

Look for Cited by and References links. Cited by will be articles written after the reference; References will be articles written before the reference.

The default SORT for results is Relevance, but you can change that to Oldest first or Most recent first. Changing the date is especially useful if you are looking for the oldest or newest articles in the database by an author.

6. OBTAINING ARTICLES - GET IT @ VCU
Get it @ VCU will get you as close to the article in one click as the publisher allows. Many times you will land at the article. Other times you will land at the Table of Contents of the issue, or at a listing of available issues. In these cases, you will have to drill to the article. NOTE: When you see a PDF link, use that instead of the Get it @ VCU link.

If VCU Libraries does not have the article at all, there will be prompts for you to enter an interlibrary loan request. You will usually receive the article in PDF format within 1-7 business days after you submit your request.

**FINAL NOTE:** Be open to changing your topic and/or emphasis based on your findings. REMEMBER, your topic might be better covered in another database, e.g., Social Services Abstracts, so test your topic in several databases before making a change. Also, you may find that in non-education databases searching just for adult learning or [theory name] without the word school may produce relevant articles outside the field of education.