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Handout Video SLA 4b: Using the Thesaurus

Thesaurus terms indicate as precisely as possible what an article is about, making them very easy to use in specific searches. Thesaurus terms can be located at the top or bottom of a database article. Thesaurus terms can also differ from the terms used in the article itself. A number of large databases feature a thesaurus. In these the thesaurus terms are usually arranged in a convenient way.

For example: you are searching for information about *the costs of air pollution* in *Business Source Premier*:

- click thesaurus
- You now see two search boxes - the top one is for searching the database itself whereas the second one is for browsing the thesaurus.
- Type in air pollution in the second search box.
- When you click browse, you are taken to the term air pollution and to other terms that start with the same letters.
- When you click air pollution, you will see a list of broader, narrower, and related terms.

  - Pollution, for example, is a *broader term* than air pollution.
  - while emissions is a *narrower term*.
  - The definition of *related terms* is self-explanatory; air quality in this case, for example.
  - Synonyms are shown under *Used for*. In a thesaurus, you select one single synonym. When you search a thesaurus using Atmosphere - pollution, you will see a reference to the preferred term air pollution.

You can now choose from the terms the ones which specify as accurately as possible what you are looking for.

- In this case, you select the original term, air pollution.
- Tick air pollution and click Add.
- The term is now automatically added in the top search box. DE precedes the term: this means Descriptor. This tells you that you are searching using a thesaurus term and not individual words in the text.
- Click Search to now find every publication that has been given the thesaurus term Air Pollution.

You can now choose Advanced Search to combine your thesaurus terms with other search terms in order to make your result as specific as possible.   .

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Or, you can combine two or more thesaurus terms with each other. In Business Source Premier, you can do this as follows:

- Firstly, search using air pollut, without an e
- then select both Air Pollutants and Air Pollution.
- You combine these two terms using OR - after all, only one of these terms needs to appear in your search results.
- Click Add and both terms will appear in the search box.
- Go back to the thesaurus search box and type in a second term - in this case, Cost.
- Select this term and change the OR to AND, as both of the thesaurus term Cost, and either one of the thesaurus terms Air Pollutants or Air Pollution should appear in your search results.
- Click Add again and the following search will appear in the search window:

(DE AIR pollutants OR DE AIR pollution) AND (DE COSTS)

This search will produce very specific search results.

So, do use a thesaurus if it is offered by a database as it will make your search results a lot more specific.