What is a Database?

Library databases are mostly full-text material (in their entirety) and summaries or descriptions of articles. They are **collections of articles** from newspapers, magazines and journals and electronic reference sources. Databases are selected for the quality and variety of resources they offer and are accessed using the Internet.

Your library pays for you to have access to a number of relevant databases. You support this with your tuition, so get the most out of your money! You can access them from home or school via the Library Webpage or use the link below.

http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/Content/Find_Articles.asp

Two short videos on the benefits of using library databases:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUp1P-ubOlc

http://youtu.be/Q2GMtIuaNzU

Differences Between the Internet and Library Databases

	The Internet	Library Databases
Examples	Google, Yahoo, Bing	*LexisNexis, Literary Reference Center or Health and Wellness Resource Center*
Review process	None – anyone can add content to the Web.	Checked for accuracy by publishers. Chosen by your college's library. *Includes "peer-reviewed" scholarly articles.*
Reliability	Unknown No quality control mechanisms!	Very
Content	Anything, from pictures of a person's pets to *personal* (usually not researched and unsubstantiated) *opinions* on gun control, abortion, etc.	Scholarly journal articles, Book reviews, Research papers, Conference papers, and other scholarly information
How often updated	Unknown/varies.	Regularly – daily, quarterly monthly
Cost	"Free" but some of the info you may need for your assignment requires a fee.	Library has paid for you to access these databases.
Organization	Very little or no organization	Very organized

Availability	Websites come and go. Locations and content continually change.	Stable.
Full text availability	Varies. Sometime requires additional fee	Most of the time. If not available check with librarian.
Search capabilities	Keyword searching. (A Keyword search looks for words anywhere in the record or article)	Search by keywords in specific fields such as author, title, and text. Search by subject headings and descriptors.
Search results	Often a huge amount of results Difficult to narrow the results. May not all be relevant.	Fewer hits with the opportunity to narrow the results even further.
Uses	Quick look-up (phone #s, addresses). Entertainment, leisure. Social networking. Assist you in selecting a topic. Government, company, organization. Current and popular news	The first stop for any academic research assignment, whether for background or biographical information, a basic overview or in-depth research coverage.

Tip # 1: Visit sites sponsored by known organizations such as the U.S. Government (.gov). Also, sites recommended by professors, librarians, and other knowledgeable sources. Try http://www.mxcc.commnet.edu/Content/Recommended_Websites.asp

Tip # 2: Verify what you've found on a website with another source.

Tip # 3: Different search engines or databases are better for different topics. You should try more than one and compare your results.

Tip # 4: Make sure your professor will accept information from a website for your assignment.

Tip # 5: Whether you use a website or library database, be sure to evaluate the source. Make sure it is not only relevant to your topic, but a reliable source.