

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY (IJESDS)

Useful Academic Databases Guide

Why Use Academic Databases?

Finding credible, peer-reviewed sources is one of the most critical parts of academic research. Unlike general internet searches, academic databases give you access to verified scholarly articles, journals, theses, and research reports that have been reviewed and approved by experts in their fields. Using credible sources strengthens your literature review, supports your arguments, and improves the overall quality of your manuscript.

Google Scholar

Website: scholar.google.com

Access: **Free**

The most widely used free academic search engine in the world. Google Scholar indexes millions of scholarly articles, theses, books, and conference papers across all disciplines. Simply go to scholar.google.com, type your search keywords, and browse the results. You can filter by date, author, and publication. Many articles provide a free PDF download link directly from the search results.

How to use: Type your keywords in the search bar. Use quotation marks for exact phrases. Click "Cited by" to find newer papers that reference a source you have found.

ResearchGate

Website: researchgate.net

Access: **Free**

A professional network for scientists and researchers where academics share their published work. Many authors upload the full text of their papers here, making it a great source for free full-text articles. You can also contact authors directly to request a copy of their paper if it is not available for free download.

How to use: Create a free account. Search by topic, author, or journal name. Request full texts directly from authors.

African Journals Online (AJOL)

Website: ajol.info

Access: **Free & Paid**

The world's largest and most diverse collection of African-published academic journals. AJOL is especially important for Nigerian and African researchers because it indexes journals from

universities and research institutions across the continent, including many Nigerian universities. It is the best platform to find research specifically about African contexts and issues.

How to use: Go to ajol.info and search by subject, journal, or keyword. Many articles are freely accessible.

HAL Science

Website: hal.science

Access: **Free**

An open-access archive maintained by French research institutions but available to researchers worldwide. HAL Science hosts a large collection of freely available scientific papers across all disciplines. IJESDS will deposit published articles in HAL Science, making your work visible to an international audience.

How to use: Go to hal.science and search by keyword or discipline. All content is freely accessible.

Academia.edu

Website: academia.edu

Access: **Free**

An online platform where researchers share their academic papers. Millions of papers are freely available for download. It is particularly useful for finding working papers, conference presentations, and unpublished research that may not yet appear in formal databases.

How to use: Create a free account. Search by topic or author. Download papers directly.

Semantic Scholar

Website: semanticscholar.org

Access: **Free**

A free AI-powered academic search engine developed by the Allen Institute for AI. It covers millions of papers across all fields of science and provides useful features like citation graphs, related papers, and summaries of key findings.

How to use: Search by keyword or paste the title of a paper to find related works.

BASE (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine)

Website: base-search.net

Access: **Free**

One of the world's most voluminous search engines for academic web resources. BASE indexes over 300 million documents from more than 10,000 content providers. It is especially good for finding open-access content from institutional repositories worldwide.

How to use: Go to base-search.net and search by keyword, author, or subject.

Scopus

Website: scopus.com

Access: **Institutional Access**

One of the largest abstract and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature in the world. Scopus is used by universities and research institutions worldwide. If your university library provides access, use Scopus for comprehensive literature searches across all disciplines. Ask your university librarian if your institution subscribes to Scopus.

How to use: Access through your university library portal. Search by keyword, author, or journal.

Tips for Effective Database Searching

- Use specific keywords related to your topic rather than broad general terms.
- Use quotation marks around phrases to search for exact matches. Example: "urban planning Nigeria".
- Use AND to combine terms. Example: estate management AND Nigeria AND valuation.
- Use OR to broaden your search. Example: "quantity surveying" OR "cost management".
- Filter results by date — focus on sources published within the last 10 years for current relevance.
- Check the reference lists of useful papers you find — they often lead you to other valuable sources.
- Set up email alerts in Google Scholar or Scopus to receive notifications of new papers on your topic.