

# 7 Strategies for Using Topic Browsing in Library Databases to Ignite Student Inquiry

Looking for practical and engaging methods to help students explore and discover new topics using the **Ultimate Databases for Schools and Public Libraries**? By implementing these strategies, you can spark students' curiosity, enhance their learning experiences, and maximize the benefits of your database investment.



## Start with an Open-Ended Exploration Activity

- Have students browse a database's topic categories without a predetermined research question.
- Ask them to jot down three topics that catch their interest and one they've never considered before.
- Discuss why certain topics stood out and how they might shape their research.

## Incorporate a “Serendipity Search” Challenge

- Encourage students to click through related topics or subjects they wouldn't typically explore.
- Have them find a surprising connection between two different topics and present it to the class.

*Note: This can help them see how research is often about discovery, not just answering a set question.*



## Use Browsing as a Pre-Research Strategy

- Before students settle on a research topic, have them spend time browsing broad subject categories.
- Ask them to compare the depth and breadth of topics available and identify gaps in their own knowledge.

*Note: This prevents them from defaulting to familiar or overly broad topics.*



## Gamify the Experience with a “Topic Treasure Hunt”

- Give students a set of prompts such as: “Find a topic related to technology that you haven’t heard of before” or “Locate a social issue that affects people in a country you’d like to learn more about.”
- Have students share their findings and reflect on what sparked their curiosity.



## Tie Browsing to Current Events or Classroom Themes

- Connect topic browsing to what students are learning in class or to current news events.
- Ask them to explore how different perspectives on an issue are represented in database topics.



## Encourage Cross-Disciplinary Connections

- Have students start in one subject area and then browse a completely different field to find unexpected connections (e.g., how innovations in space exploration connect to advancements in medical technology).

*Note: This helps them develop a more holistic approach to research.*



## Use It to Combat “I Don’t Know What to Research” Syndrome

- If a student struggles to pick a research topic, encourage them to spend 10 minutes browsing the library database before deciding.
- Have them reflect on which topics made them ask, “I wonder...?”