

## Narrowing Your Topic with Reference Resources



### 1. What are Reference Resources?

Sources of information that give you general overviews or background information on broad topics areas. You can typically find this type of information in print or digital **Encyclopedias** or in specialized **Reference Databases** like *Issues and Controversies*, *Gale Virtual Reference Library*, or *Credo Reference*.

### 2. Why should I use Reference Resources before I start my research?

Two reasons:

- **Can you talk about your topic for one minute without repeating yourself?** If not, you need Reference Resources to give a general overview of that topic area – the things experts already recognize as “**common knowledge**” about your topic.
- Most research topics that students choose are **too broad**. Reference resources help students to **narrow in on a specific aspect** of a broad topic by telling you:
  - The main ideas or key concepts within your topic
  - Historical context or how the topic conversation has developed over time
  - Potential problem or controversies within your topic
  - Potential causes or solutions to the problems

### 3. I've read some Reference Resources on my topic. Now what?

Once you've learned about the various aspects or issues within your broad topic area:

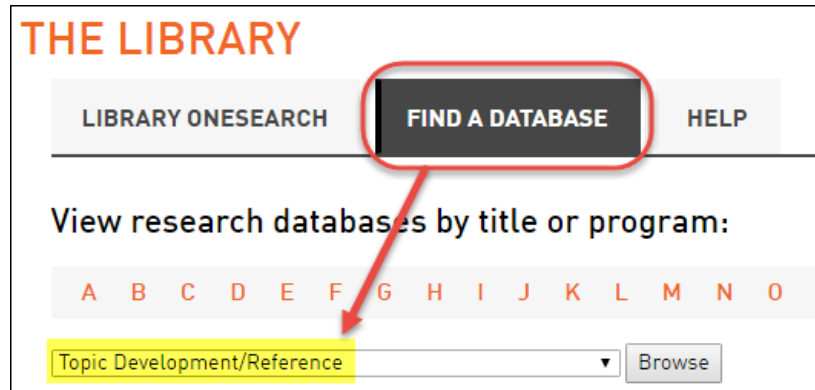
- **Focus in on ONE aspect or issue** to research. Focus on an aspect that is worth investigating and distinct enough that you can work with it.
- Try to **write your focused topic as a QUESTION**. This question will guide your research.

#### Characteristics of a GOOD Research Question:

- The answer to your question is not immediately obvious. It cannot be answered with a Yes, No, or a definition. You should have to explain, defend, or argue the answer to your question.
- Your question forces a different view of the issue.
- Your question highlights an inconsistency, inaccuracy, or incompleteness in an accepted position or argument.

## 4. How do I access the online Reference Resources in the Library?

- Start at the HTC Library website: [www.hennepintech.edu/library](http://www.hennepintech.edu/library)
- Go to the **Find a Database** tab
- In the drop-down menu, select **Topic Development/Reference**.



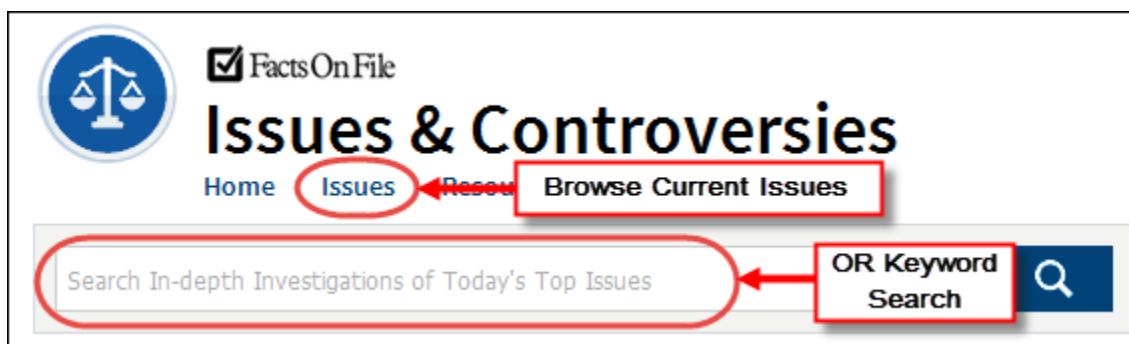
- This will bring you to a list of specialized reference databases available to you. **The best databases for general overviews and background information on your topic are:**
  - *Issues & Controversies*
  - *Gale Virtual Reference Library*
  - *Credo Reference*
  - *Points of View Reference Center*

## 5. How do use the online Reference Resources?

### Issues & Controversies - online database

*The Issues & Controversies database explores and analyzes hundreds of hot topics in politics, business, government, crime, law, energy, education, health, family, science, foreign policy, race, rights, society, and culture.*

Use the **Issues** link or the **Search Box** to find overviews on your topic




Use the **Issues** link to browse by Broad Topic area:

## Issue Index: By Subject Browse Issues

<b>Crime, Law, and Justice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Capital Punishment</li><li>Crime &amp; Law Enforcement</li><li>DNA Evidence</li><li>Law &amp; Legal Matters</li><li>Prisons &amp; Prisoners</li><li>Supreme Court &amp; Judicial System</li></ul>	<b>Families and Youth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Family, Pregnancy, &amp; Children</li><li>Housing &amp; Homelessness</li><li>Teens &amp; Adolescents</li></ul> <b>Global Issues and World Affairs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Foreign Policy</li><li>Middle East Policy</li><li>Nuclear Weapons &amp; Arms Control</li><li>Population &amp; Demographics</li><li>Sanctions</li><li>Terrorism</li><li>United Nations</li><li>War &amp; Conflict</li></ul>	<b>Race, Rights, and Liberties</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Abortion &amp; Reproductive Rights</li><li>Affirmative Action</li><li>Animal Rights</li><li>Civil Liberties &amp; Constitutional Rights</li><li>Civil Rights &amp; Minority Rights</li><li>Gay Rights</li><li>Gun Control</li><li>Human Rights</li><li><b>Racial Profiling</b></li><li>Right to Die</li><li>Women's Rights</li></ul> <b>Science and Technology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Artificial Intelligence</li><li>Autonomous Vehicles</li><li>Biotechnology</li><li>Cloud Computing</li><li>Computer Security</li><li>Consumer Electronics</li><li>Environmental Technology</li><li>Food Safety</li><li>Healthcare Technology</li><li>Internet of Things</li><li>Manufacturing Technology</li><li>Mobile Devices</li><li>Robotics</li><li>Space Exploration</li><li>Virtual Reality</li><li>Wearable Devices</li></ul>
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Review Focused Questions within a topic area:

## Racial Profiling




**Do U.S. police departments use appropriate force when dealing with the public?**

**SUPPORTERS ARGUE** Reports of widespread police brutality and abuse are exaggerated. Only rarely do officers use excessive force, though they must ...

**OPPONENTS ARGUE** Police departments across the country too often use excessive force, injuring and occasionally killing people who pose little ...

[Read More](#)




**Should police have the right to stop, question, and frisk anyone they deem suspicious?**

**SUPPORTERS ARGUE** Through stop-and-frisk tactics, police have removed guns from the streets, prevented murders, and made New York City one of the ...

**OPPONENTS ARGUE** Using specious and vague justifications, police use stop and frisk to wrongly harass innocent members of minority groups. The use ...

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### OVERVIEW




[Play Video Overview](#)

Racial profiling occurs when a person in authority, particularly a law enforcement agent, suspects people of criminal behavior based solely on their ...

[Read More](#)

### WATCH A DEBATE

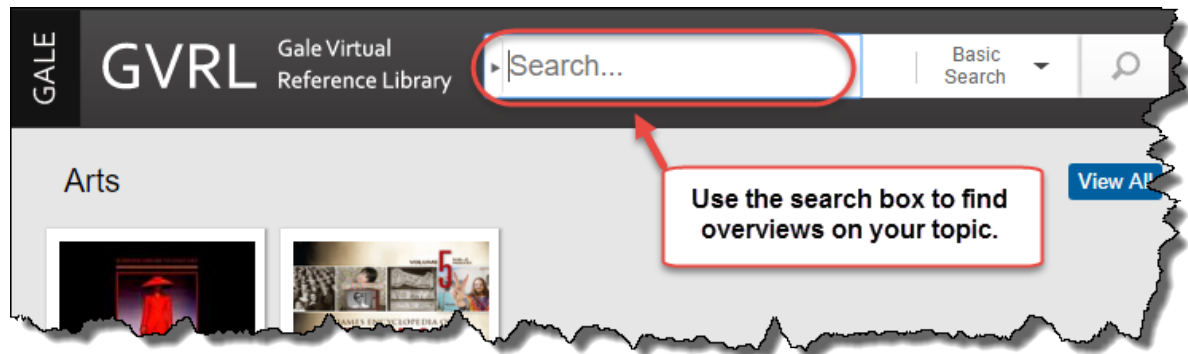


**U.S. Airports Should Use Racial and Religious Profiling: A Debate**  
01:46:55

## Gale Virtual Reference Library - online database

*Gale Virtual Reference Library contains subject-specific online encyclopedias on dozens of topics including business, medicine, environmental issues, science, religion, social science, and law. Great for topic overviews and topic development.*

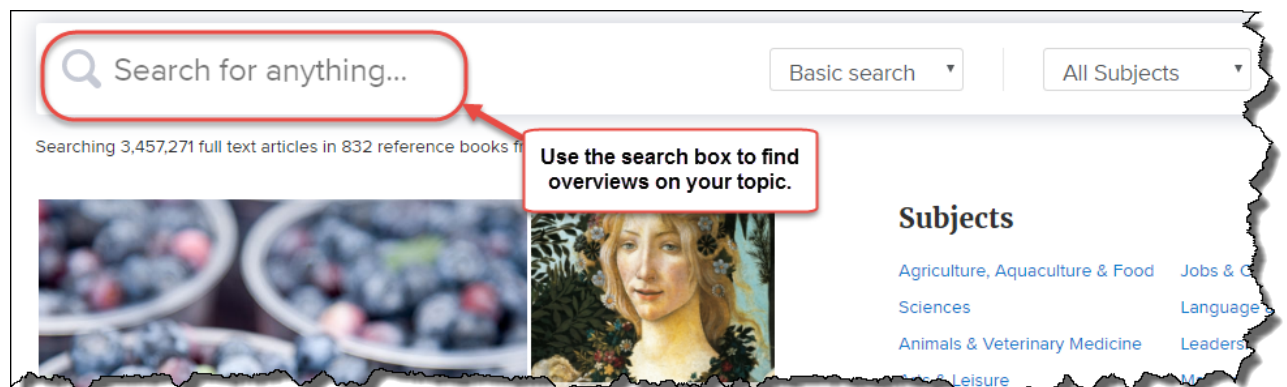
Use the **Search Box** to find encyclopedia entries on your topic:



## Credo Reference - online database

*Credo Reference database contains hundreds of general and subject-specific encyclopedias, handbooks, and dictionaries on a wide range of topics.*

Use the **Search Box** to find background information on your topic:



## Points of View Reference Center - online database

*Points of View Reference Center database provides more than 270 current issues topics, each with an overview, point (argument), counter-point (opposing argument), and Critical Thinking Guide.*

Use the **Browse by Category** or the **Search Box** to find overviews on your Broad Topic.

Searching: **Points of View Reference Center** | Search Other Databases  
Euthanasia Search Clear ?  
Basic Search | Advanced Search | Search History

**1. Search for resources on your specific issue OR...**

Points of View Reference Center

**Browse by Category** Show All

**2. Browse for a predefined issue.**

- Abortion Issues
  - Abortion
  - Abortion & Minors
  - Late-Term Abortion
  - More
- AIDS / HIV
  - AIDS Drugs in Africa
  - Condom Distribution
  - HIV / AIDS Status & Privacy
  - More
- Animal Welfare
  - Animal Experimentation
  - Animal Rights
  - Domestic Animal Overpopulation
  - More
- Arts & Culture
  - Arts & Music in Public Schools
  - Arts Funding
  - Decline of Reading
  - More

**TIP:** If you are using the Search Box to find overviews of your topic, your results may **default to only show Point of View articles** in the results.

To view Overviews and more, look for the **Source Types** area on the left-side of your results. Select the **All Results** checkbox.

Update Show More » Limiters set

**Source Types**

- All Results
- Points of View (8)

Update Show More

**Select All Results to see more resources on your topic.**

4. Counterpoint: **Euthanasia**  
By: Griswold, Ann. *Point of View: Euthanasia*

5. **Euthanasia: Guide**  
*Point of View: Euthanasia*