

# HOW TO MAKE KEYWORDS



## 1. TURNING A TOPIC INTO KEYWORDS

If you put in your entire topic into the database search, it probably won't get suitable results. Breaking down your topic into keywords is the first step in the research process. Think of the main parts of your topic (places, people, concepts, dates) and use those as keywords.



## 2. AVOID JUDGEMENT OR RELATIONSHIP WORDS

Try to avoid judgement words (advantages, disadvantages) or relationship words (compare, contrast). There are many kinds of these words and using them may exclude sources because they don't include those exact words. Avoiding relationship or judging words may increase your search results and you can decide whether the sources fit your needs.



## 3. SYNONYMS

**Synonyms** are words that have the same or similar meanings. These can be useful in creating keywords as you can include multiple synonyms to increase the results of your search. For example if your topic was about **academic success** you could also use **school performance** as a keyword. They are similar, but not the same.



## 4. ABBREVIATIONS

**Abbreviations** are shortened words or phrases. It is good practice to expand abbreviations to include all the words that make it up. For example, if you were researching PTSD, your keywords should include "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder".

# HOW TO USE KEYWORDS

## SEARCH STRATEGIES

Now that you've created your keywords, you can now enter them into the database. There are different ways to enter your keywords: you can link them together using boolean terms, search by subjects or using different characters to alter your search results.



### 1. USING BOOLEAN TERMS

**Boolean terms** are words that can link multiple keywords together.

**AND** is used to find articles that mention both keywords.

ex. Academic performance **AND** stress

**OR** is used to find articles that mention either of the keywords entered.

ex. Italian film **OR** Italian cinema

**NOT** excludes keywords from your search. Be careful because it could remove results that could otherwise be helpful

ex. genetically modified organism **NOT** food

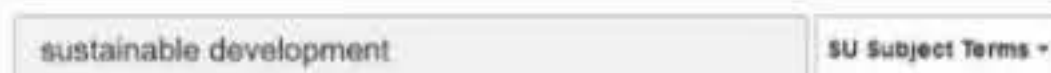
### 2. USING EXACT SEARCHES

If you are looking for your keywords to appear as an exact phrase, surround your keywords with **quotation marks**.

ex. "renewable energy"

### 3. USING SUBJECT SEARCHES

Articles are grouped in databases under different subjects. By clicking these subjects that useful articles are organized under, you can find related articles. You can also change your keyword search type to **SUBJECT** to search subject words specifically.



Subjects: Sustainable development, Technological innovations, Diffusion of innovations.

### 4. USING TRUNCATED SEARCHES OR WILDCARDS

By using a wildcard, you can cut your word down and search for variations. They are also useful in finding keywords that may have regional variations (American vs. British spelling)

ex. **therap\*** will search for therapy, therapeutic, and therapist

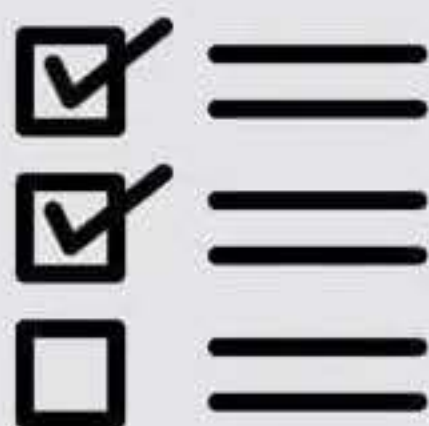
**behavio?r** will search for behavior and behaviour

**wom#n** will search for woman and women



# DATABASE TIPS & TRICKS

Make the library databases work for you!



## 1 USE LIMITERS

Limiters filter results. Refine results by "Peer Reviewed" to only show academic articles, "Publication Date" to show a range of dates, "Source Type" to show different material types and "Full-Text" to show sources that AC has access to.



## 2 USE PERMALINKS TO SHARE ARTICLES

Permalinks are permanent links or a stable URL that links back to an article. When citing an article check the database for a "Permalink" feature.



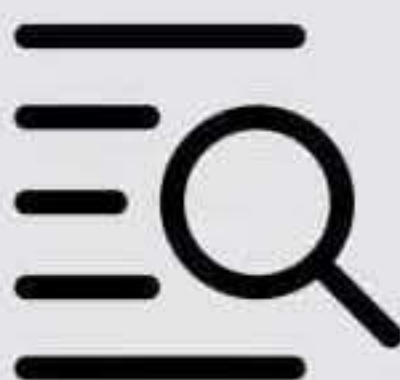
## 3 CITATION GENERATORS

Citation tools can be found in most databases. They give citation information for an article in different citation styles. Some may have errors so instead of copy and pasting, double-check these against an official citation style guide.



## 4 SAVE YOUR SOURCES

Save articles for later by saving the article to a database folder, by saving it directly to your Google Drive, or by emailing the article to yourself.



## 5 USE FULL-TEXT FINDER

Sometimes, if a PDF is not available, a Full-Text Finder button will appear under the database item. Using this may lead you to a database that does have a PDF or other full-text version available.



## 6 SEARCH THE LIBRARY CATALOGUE

You can also search the catalogue through EBSCO Discovery (the default database on the library homepage). By clicking "Catalogue Only" you can see what physical materials the library has available.

# EVALUATING SOURCES

In your research, you will come across many different types of sources of information that you can use. Before using them, it is important to ask yourself some questions about the sources that you find to make sure that they are suitable for academic research.



## Authority and Credibility

Who is the author and what are their qualifications? Authors may be writing on behalf of an organization and their background (education, occupation, experience) should be looked at. Who is the publisher? Publishers can range from academic to commercial, which can change the nature of an article. If you are using a website, make sure to check if it's an organizational website or a blog.



## Currency and Timeliness

When was the information published? Research can be old and outdated and websites may not have been updated in quite some time. Check when websites were created and updated. Sometimes outdated information can be used for historical reasons, as long as it remains accurate.



## Accuracy and Reliability

Is the information well-researched? Check if an article has citations, footnotes, or a bibliography. This shows that the claims made in the article are backed up by evidence and can be verified by another source. If the paper includes original research, does it include how it obtained the information or the method of data collection?



## Objectivity or Bias

Is the article dealing with opinions or facts? Is it being portrayed as objective or subjective? Articles can potentially be promoting social or political agendas by presenting opinions as fact. If you are viewing web articles, make sure to check that advertisements are clearly labelled.



## Purpose and Intended Audience

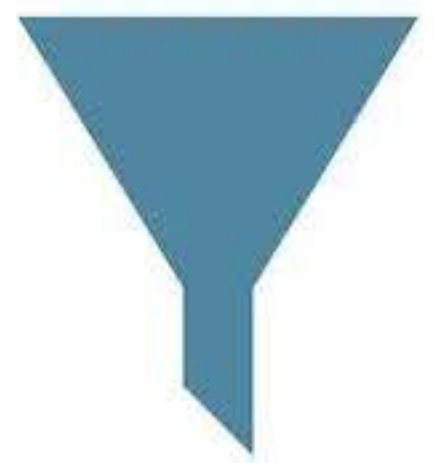
What is the purpose of the article? Articles can be meant to inform, educate, entertain, sell a product or service or to persuade others.

The language used in an article depends on its audience. Articles can be meant for scholars and researchers but also for the general public, or for students that may not have the same level of experience as scholars. Language may help you determine who the article is meant for.

# TOOLS TO NARROW YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

## WHY NARROW DOWN A TOPIC?

If you have found a topic to research, but are finding too many sources and can't decide what's important, you may have to narrow down your topic.



## HOW DO YOU NARROW DOWN A TOPIC?

**Lens:** Can your topic be focused through a single 'lens' or point of view? Rather than generally researching a topic, you can look at how it affected a group, an individual, a place etc.



**Break down to smaller parts:** Can a part of your topic be broken down further to a more specific topic? For example, if you were researching the carbon cycle and its relationship to climate change, you could look at the oceanic carbon cycle to make it more specific.



**Place:** Determining a place that your topic is related to can help narrow down your search. Narrow your topic by including a country or a region.



**Time:** Does your topic take place during a specific decade or century? Some topics may include named historical periods or eras.



**Type:** Are you researching a topic that involves a specific demographic (eg. ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, or social group)? Make sure to add a demographic type to your search if it does.



To narrow your search, you will probably have to use more than one of these tools! Always double check assignment guidelines and ask your professor if you are unsure if your topic is narrow enough.