

# Keyword Search Strategy

**STEP 1:**

**State your topic as a question/s to be answered:**

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**STEP 2:**

**List academic disciplines or professions that might be interested in your question (psychology, engineering, music etc):**

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**STEP 3:**

**List an aspect/s of your topic on which you want to focus (discipline-specific aspects, location, time period, etc.):**

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**STEP 4:**

**Narrow or revise your question if necessary.**

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**STEP 5:**

**Analyze your question into keywords (ideas or concepts that are significant and expressive):**  
*(Terms such as "effect," "relationship between" and many verbs do not usually work as search concepts.)*

CONCEPT 1	CONCEPT 2	CONCEPT 3	CONCEPT 4

**STEP 6:**

**Consider possible synonyms, related terms, as well as broader and narrower terms for your concepts. Use an encyclopedia, thesaurus, *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, or "browse" databases (catalog or relevant indexes) to compile more precise search words or phrases related to your topic. Continue to build this list throughout your searches.**

KEYWORDS: Synonyms for Concept 1	KEYWORDS: Synonyms for Concept 2	KEYWORDS: Synonyms for Concept 3	KEYWORDS: Synonyms for Concept 4

**STEP 7:**

**Boolean Operators** (a computer logic) employ the words **AND**, **OR** and **AND NOT** (or just **NOT**) within a search statement to increase precision or relevance in a database search. **OR** expands a search, telling the computer to retrieve records with any of the search terms used with this operator. **AND** narrows the search, telling the computer to retrieve records that have all of the search terms used with this operator. **AND NOT** excludes or eliminates a particular term in a search used with this operator. Other operators, such as **proximity operators**, include **NEAR** (searches for records with words close to each other in any order) and **WITHIN #** (searches for records with words that occur within # words). *EXAMPLE:* In Griffin Catalog:

Typing **classical OR music** finds books that could be about classical architecture or could also be about rap music.

Typing **classical AND music** finds books that have both "classical" and "music" somewhere in the record retrieved and will therefore find many books about the topic of classical music.

Typing **music AND NOT classical** finds books about music but leaves out all the books with the word "classical" somewhere in the books' records. Using **AND NOT** can be very risky; this search can still retrieve books about Bach and Mozart and may leave out many desirable results!

*Note: Using quotation marks around operators or phrases with operators negate their operator function in Griffin.*

**Truncation/Wildcard:** Use symbols such as \* or ? in a database in order to retrieve all words that contain a root of a word or segments of a word. *EXAMPLES:* **sing\*** would retrieve sing, singing, singers, single, etc.; **wom?n** would retrieve women, woman, womyn.

**Write possible search statements by combining your keywords with Boolean operators (AND, OR, AND NOT) and truncation as needed to broaden or narrow your search.**

*EXAMPLE:* (conservation OR protection) AND environmen\*

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**STEP 8:**

**The topic or the aspects of the topic on which you choose to focus should determine what databases you search. Look through the libraries' list of article indexes and write down the databases that look specific to your research (ABI/Inform for business, Sport Business for sports, MLA for literature, etc.)**

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**STEP 9:**

**Try entering your search statements into these databases and evaluate your results. Return to STEP 6 as needed.**