

Finding and Evaluating Information Sources

Finding worthwhile resources to complete an assignment is not just a matter of luck, there is a certain amount of **skill** involved in conducting a successful search.

The process can be broken down into five steps known as **SKILL**:

- **S**ummarise
- **K**eywords
- **I**dentify synonyms/ alternative terms and alternate spellings
- **L**ink your keywords and phrases
- **L**ocate your information

SKILL steps

Step 1: Summarise

Test your understanding of your assignment topic by summarising it in your own words or developing a mind map.

Step 2: Keywords

After you have summarised the topic, identify the keywords and phrases that are the most important. For example, in the sentence -

Discuss the environmental impact of land clearing in Australia - the keywords are:

- environmental impact
- land clearing
- Australia

Step 3: Identify synonyms and alternative keywords

Not all of the relevant literature will use exactly the same keyword. You will need to think about:

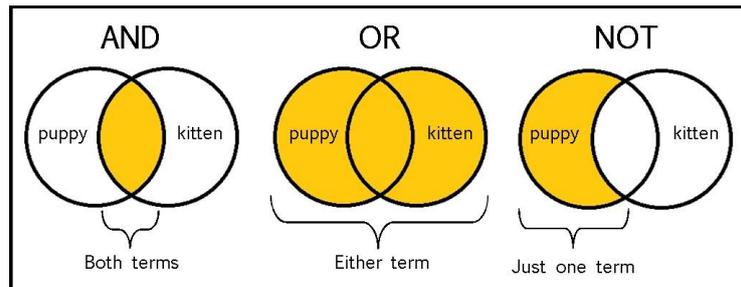
- possible synonyms (words that mean the same thing)
- alternative keywords (e.g. land clearing / vegetation clearing)
- words with different spellings (e.g. American vs Australian spelling)

Tip: *In a library, you can use the truncation feature to find all word derivatives of environmental by using an asterisk, environ**

Step 4: Link your keywords and phrases

Think about how you will use your key words and phrases to construct a search. For instance, if searching a library database you might use a combination of:

- Boolean operators — use AND, OR, NOT to combine keywords. For instance, using AND will find result both words (environmental AND impact)

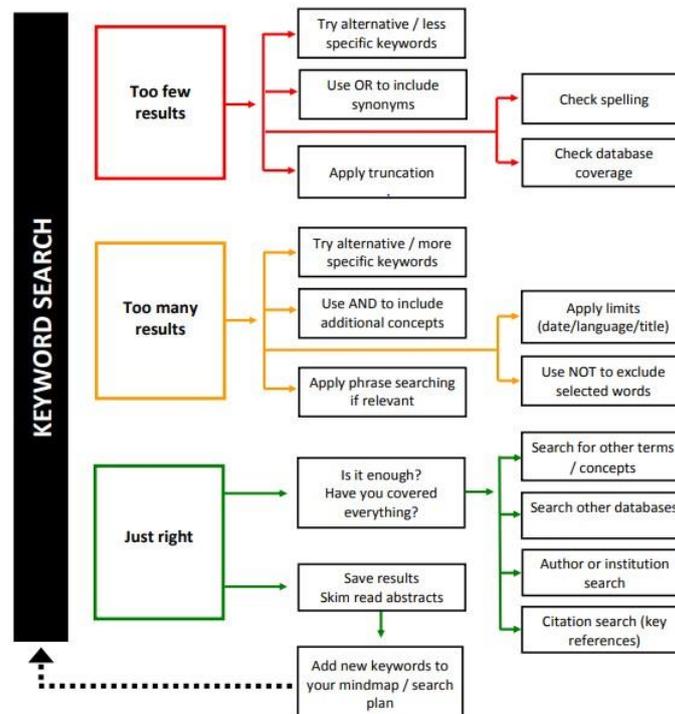


Step 5: Locate and evaluate your results

If you are not getting the right results, or are getting too many or too few results, you might need to revise your search strategy.

(The University of Queensland Library, n.d.)

Keyword search: improving your results



(The University of Leeds Library, n.d)

How reliable is the information I've found? Does it pass the **TADPOLE test?**

TADPOLE	Questions to ask
T ype	What type of source is this? Primary/secondary/written/other
A uthor	What are the author's credentials? Is the author biased?
D ate	Does the date affect the context of the source?
P urpose	Who is the audience? Why was this written? What beliefs might affect the source?
O pinion / Fact	Is this information validated?
L anguage	Is this written in a neutral language without emotion or bias?
E vidence	Is this information corroborated with other sources? Can I trust this information?

(Chalk, 2018)

Things to consider around the reliability of websites

Points to consider	Least likely to be reliable	More likely to be reliable	Most likely to be reliable
What sort of website is it?	.com is a commercial website	.net is a private business or association .org is an organisation	.edu is an educational institution .gov is a government website
Where did you find the information?	On the web e.g. Wikipedia, Facebook	A library search	A library search with peer review or scholarly filter on
Is the website working	Many broken links and no recent updates		Working links and last update is recent
Layout	Amateurish	User-friendly	User-friendly and professional
What country is it? The may impact on how relevant the information is for your assignment Country codes can be found here	Country will not be relevant for my topic		Country will be relevant for my topic

(The University of Queensland Library, n.d.)

References

The University of Leeds Library. (n.d.). *Keyword search: improving your results*. Retrieved from

https://library.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/54/keyword_search_improving_your_results

The University of Queensland Library (UQ). (n.d.). *Research Tools and Techniques* Retrieved from <https://web.library.uq.edu.au/research-tools-techniques/search-techniques>

Chalk, T. (2018). *EDS4408 Week 3 Topic 4: Selecting and using primary and secondary sources* [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from

<https://usqstudydesk.usq.edu.au/m2/course/view.php?id=13831>