

PREPARING FOR RESEARCH

Develop your **KEYWORDS** (main concepts). If you have an essential question, break it down into keywords. List your **KEYWORD(S)**; find one or more **RELATED TERMS** or synonyms for each.

Essential Question: _____

KEYWORD(S): _____

(AND) Related terms

(OR) Synonyms

(NOT) Unwanted terms

KEYWORD DEVELOPMENT

- I. Locate and write down **definitions** of your keywords.
- II. While reading and writing the definitions keep an eye out for issues that will help you focus your topic.
- III. The definitions will also help you develop related terms. Use a separate sheet of paper to write your definitions and to note the issues.

For *definitions* use one or more of the following:

- **Gale Virtual Reference Library**
- **Gale Opposing Viewpoints in Context**
- Britannica Online – www.britannica.com
- Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary:
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>
- Oxford Dictionaries:
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/>

For a *thesaurus*, use:

- Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>
- Oxford Dictionaries (Synonyms): <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/>
- Thesaurus: <http://www.thesaurus.com/>

TIPS for searching through **Databases**

- Use a combination of search terms
- Use synonyms
- Use Boolean techniques
 - AND, OR, NOT
 - Quotation marks around phrases or specific terms
 - * (asterisk) use is called **TRUNCATION** and gives results of *any word* that contains the exact combination of letters before the asterisk)
- **Keep trying different combinations** until you find what you're looking for – don't give up!

Every database is different, but most will give you options on how you can narrow down search results. If you have too many results, try the following *filters*:

- Choose **Full text**
- Choose **Academic Journals / Scholarly Journals / Peer-Reviewed** articles
- Choose a range of publication years
 - Most instructors want only the most recent research; verify with your teacher what range of years you should search through. Depending on your topic, articles that were published in the 70s or 80s may still be acceptable/valid.
- Choose a specific region; for example, North America or United States
- Specify the language of the article to English

If your results are too limited, you may need to eliminate some filters