

## DEVELOPING KEYWORDS

**STEP 1: SUMMARIZE TOPIC** - State your topic in one or two sentences. Be as specific as possible.

**Examples:**     *I want to find information on how home schooling affects social development.*

*I want to investigate the seasonal patterns in the vertical distribution of phytoplankton.*

**STEP 2: IDENTIFY CONCEPTS** - Underline the main concepts in your topic summary. Concepts are the different ideas which make up each unique search topic. Most topics can be broken down into two or three main concepts.

**Examples:**     *I want to find information on how home schooling affects social development.*

*I want to investigate the seasonal patterns in the vertical distribution of phytoplankton.*

**STEP 3: DEVELOP CONCEPT WORDS/PHRASES** - Create a list of words or phrases which describes each of your identified concepts and use these in your search:

- Try to think of appropriate **synonyms or variant forms** since a variety of words and phrases could be used to describe the same concept.
  - *social development* could also relate to *socialization* or *social skills*;
  - *adolescents* could also be referred to as *teens* or *teenagers*
- Use "**controlled**" words and phrases as found in an index or catalog. These are useful for uniting under one term a concept described by several synonymous words and phrases.
  - i.e. *ability testing*, *curricula*, and *preschool* are subheadings of the subject *Education*
- Consider possible hierarchical **relationships within a particular concept**.
  - i.e. for a geographic concept, are you only interested in a particular country or is the broader region also of interest?
- **Widen, then narrow.** If you're not sure what concepts might be related, read news, magazine, or encyclopedia entries to understand how your topic relates to the overall issue.
  - Reading a news article on home schooling, the topics of *regulation*, *testing*, and *extracurricular activities* are mentioned. These might be additional terms to search.
- Use **word truncation**. Examine each keyword to see if it can be truncated with a symbol (e.g., \*, #, ?, +) to a shorter "root" form.
  - i.e. *prevent\** will retrieve *prevention*, *preventing*, *prevented*, or *prevents*
  - To find the proper truncation symbol, consult the database's Help section

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