

## Searching Tips

### Search Connectors

Connect search terms with **AND**, **OR**, or **NOT**

**AND—Narrows a search.** Combines 2 or more main ideas. If the research question is "How have humans affected climate change?" Construct the search with AND.

**Example:** Humans **AND** Climate Change.

**OR—Broadens a search.** Combines synonymous or related terms. Locates references that include any of the terms entered, but not necessarily all of them.

**Example :** Climate Change **OR** Global Warming.

**NOT—Excludes** documents that contain a certain term. Retrieves references that include the first terms but not the second.

**Example:** Navy **NOT** color

### Truncation Symbol

The asterisk (\*) can be used as a truncation symbol to retrieve word variations and plurals. For **example:** If you enter ethic\* in a keyword search box, you can get results for ethic, ethical, and ethics.

## Research Tips

*When is the best time to start research?*

Earlier is always better. You want to have plenty of time to search for sources, review the material, write your paper/complete your assignment, and make any necessary changes before turning it in.

*Should I use the Internet/search engines?*

The web can sometimes be overwhelming. Remember Step 5, you always want to evaluate your sources. The library recommends starting with library resources such as databases and books, as these are more reliable sources.

*How do I know if I have plagiarized?*

Some types of plagiarism can be tricky to detect for students. You can find out more about plagiarism in the Library's Copyright & Plagiarism Lib-Guide ([libguides.blinn.edu/Copyright\\_Plagiarism](http://libguides.blinn.edu/Copyright_Plagiarism))

## Need Help?

### **Ask A Librarian!**

You can come in to one of our locations, call, e-mail, chat, or text us. Go to [www.blinn.edu/library](http://www.blinn.edu/library) for information on hours and locations. Scan the QR code (below) to go directly to the library website.



# Library Research

## Steps for Success

library@blinn.edu

Brenham: 979-830-4451

Bryan: 979-209-7273

RELLIS: 979-209-8950

Schulenburg: 979-743-5226

Text: 979-457-4051

## Step 1—Select your topic

If possible, select a topic that interests you. If your instructor assigns a topic, make the most of it by finding something about it that interests you.

Narrow the topic as much as possible.

**Example:** *Environment* → *Damage to environment*  
→ *Effects of Climate Change*

But do not narrow your topic too much.

**Example:** *Environment* → *Damage to environment*  
→ *Effects of Climate Change* → *Climate Change in Texas* → *Climate Change in Bryan, TX*  
→ *Climate Change in Bryan, TX in 1982*

Having too narrow a topic will severely limit the amount of research you are able to do, while having too broad a topic will require spending all of your time looking at articles and books.

## Step 2—Create your research question

This will help determine keywords for searching the library catalog and/or databases.

**Example:** “Is people’s disregard for the environment the cause of climate change?”

Some Keywords/Search Terms: *Environment*, *Disregard*, *Climate Change*, *People*, or *Humans*

## Step 3—Find keywords for your topic

List keywords, synonyms, alternative spellings or related search terms for your topic.

**Example:** Instead of *Climate Change* try *Global Warming* or *Greenhouse Effect*

Tips:

- ◆ Make a list of all the keywords you want to search
- ◆ Refer back to the list when you have an interruption in your searching time

## Step 4—Decide on sources and search your topic

- ◆ Do you need books, articles, films, Internet sources etc.?

A good rule of thumb is to have AT LEAST one more source than the number of pages you are required to write, but always follow your instructor’s requirements.

Search your topics in a library catalog or database. Always check your spelling when searching.

## Step 5—Evaluate your sources

Evaluate your results for content. Ask yourself:

- ◆ When was it written? Is the information current?
- ◆ Who wrote it? Are they an expert?
- ◆ Can the information be verified by another source?
- ◆ Is the information biased?

## Step 6—Organize your thoughts

When reading through your sources make notes about concepts you think would be important in your research paper. Focus on gathering information that answers your research question. Make notes in a way that is most comfortable for you:

- ◆ Write an outline of your paper
- ◆ Write notecards
- ◆ Make copies of articles or book pages and highlight passages—*Make sure that you DO NOT highlight, underline, etc. in Library books!*
- ◆ Type notes as you read articles

## Step 7—Create your bibliography

Always consult a style guide handbook if you have any questions about citing your sources. You can find more information about Citing Sources on the library’s Citing Sources LibGuide ([libguides.blinn.edu/citingsources](http://libguides.blinn.edu/citingsources)).

## Step 8—Write your paper

Always:

- ◆ Check spelling
- ◆ Check grammar
- ◆ Check instructor’s requirements

You may need to write several drafts before you are satisfied.