

# Generating Search Terms

Write down your initial topic or question:

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Use the table below to brainstorm search terms that can be used to look for sources during your research. It helps to fill out as much as the table as you can before you begin searching the databases, and add more keywords to it as you are researching and reading.

- Try:
- Google
  - Wikipedia
  - Reference Books
  - Database subjects

Main Idea keywords	Word or phrase 1	Word or phrase 2	Word or phrase 3
Write the keywords in your topic that represent the main ideas.			
	Synonyms for word 1	Synonyms for word 2	Synonyms for word 3

Combine the words and phrases you think of to find different articles on the topic. Different combinations will bring back different search results. The words you type into the database search blank are called a *search string*. Here are 4 examples of search strings on the topic of *whether minors should be able to get cosmetic surgery*.

*underage\* "cosmetic surgery"*  
*"elective surgery" teen\**

*juvenile "cosmetic surgery"*  
*surg\* cosmetic adolescen\**

Notice that I put phrases "in quotes," and I truncated the roots of words with an asterisk (\*), such as teen\* for teen, teens, teenager, teenagers, etc. Now try it with your topic. Construct 2 search strings for database use:

**Search string #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Search string #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

Try them out! You'll find more keywords and subject terms as you use the databases, and you'll think of more search strings as you go along. If you don't find enough articles, check your spelling. Or reduce the number of words in your search string. Or change the words you're using.

