Step 1. Choose a topic:

Click on the Research tab at the top of the Library’s home page. Choose The Research Process from the resulting dropdown menu. Step 1 of this Guide will help in providing ideas and links to databases, websites or books that feature current issues and events.

Step 2. Decide where to search for and locate the information you need.

- How much do you already know about your topic? For basic information, check an encyclopedia or reference book.

Do you need:

- **Books?** On the Library’s web page, use the Find it Fast option for the Library Catalog. (See the Searching the Library’s Catalog (CS Link) Quick Guide to learn how to search the Library Catalog.)

- **Journal/newspaper articles?** Click on Research Databases to determine which databases would be best to use. (See the Searching Academic Search Complete Quick Guide or Searching LexisNexis Quick Guide for information on searching those two specific databases.)

- **Web sites?** How do you know if a web site is reliable and/or credible? (See the Evaluating Websites Quick Guide.)

**All of the Library’s Quick Guides can be found at [http://library.cscc.edu/quickguides](http://library.cscc.edu/quickguides)**
**Step 3. Search for information on your topic using keywords.**

These are words or phrases that best describe the information you need.

- **Example:** If you want to know what effect global warming has on agriculture, your keywords or phrases might be "global warming" or "agriculture and effects."
- Are there different ways to phrase your search? Think of as many different keywords as you can that describe your topic.
- **Example:** If you’re looking for information about athletes and steroid use, you could use athletes and steroids, sports and drug use, sports and performance enhancing drugs, etc.

**SearchingTip:** Avoid stop words. The top ten stop words are: the of to a an in for is on that.

**Step 4. Refine your topic.**

Is your topic too broad (too many results) or too narrow (not enough results)?

- To narrow your search: combine more than one keyword or phrase with **AND.**
  - (Example: "gun laws" AND Ohio will only display articles that mention gun laws and the state of Ohio).
- To expand your search: combine more than one keyword or phrase with **OR.**
  - (Example: "professional athletes" and (wages OR salaries). **Note:** using OR is especially helpful when there are multiple keywords with the same meaning, such as wages, salaries, payments, etc.)

**More SearchingTips:**

Most databases provide an option to use truncation or wild cards. Not every database uses the same symbol. The examples below tend to be the most commonly used symbols.

- **Truncation:** Use the asterisk (*) to truncate a word.
  - (Example: garden* will find results with garden, gardens, gardening, gardener, etc.)
- **Wildcards:** Use the question mark (?) to replace a letter in a word.
  - (Example: wom?n finds woman or women)
- **Phrase searching:** Use quotes (" ") around words that appear together.
  - (Example: “genetic engineering”)

For a detailed tutorial on how to conduct research, visit the Library Research Guide, The Research Process.

**Questions? Ask a Librarian!**

Columbus Campus: Library, Columbus Hall Reference Desk: 614.287.2460
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http://library.cscc.edu/