BUILD A SEARCH STRATEGY!

Your topic in one sentence

(Does your topic answer 3 of these? who, what, where, when, why, how?)

**Break your topic into concepts.** Underneath, create a list of words to broaden or narrow each using synonyms, similar terms, and subject headings.

Define limits to your search, such as dates of publication, scholarly articles only, ignore materials containing certain terms (NOT), etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT 1</th>
<th>CONCEPT 2</th>
<th>CONCEPT 3</th>
<th>CONCEPT 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOT (exclude resource that contain the following):**

**Other limits:**

**Search tips:**

1. Start with general terms and focus once you learn more about your topic.

2. Combine your terms wisely- using AND . . . OR
   “AND”- your concepts to combine: (poverty and housing)
   “OR”- your synonyms to expand: (policy or policies or law or laws or legislat*)

3. Use TRUNCATION. This is when you search on the root of a word, to broaden your search.
   For example: search homeless*, which would retrieve homeless or homelessness

4. Once you start getting results, take clues from the records. Look at the article’s title, abstract, keywords, subjects or “subject headings” - sometimes called “Descriptors”.
   If you find good words, add them to your personal search log to keep track of what works. Use these in your next search. Searching will be easier, as well as more powerful.

Librarian Contact: Sika Berger sberger@smith.edu

SSW160 Class Guide: [libguides.smith.edu/ssw160](http://libguides.smith.edu/ssw160) | Feedback: [ly.smith.edu/ef/libclassfeedback](http://ly.smith.edu/ef/libclassfeedback)