

# TURNING RESEARCH QUESTIONS INTO KEYWORDS

## WHAT THEY ARE

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Keywords are the keys to your search success. They are words that identify the core ideas or concepts in your research question.

In this guide, you will learn to identify core concepts, list keywords, and select synonyms to create a search string in the EUI Library's catalogue and/or subject databases.

## STEPS

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# 1

### FINDING THE KEYWORDS IN YOUR QUESTION

Write out your research question or statement & circle or highlight the keywords. For example: How does **AI** affect **women's** participation in the workplace?

# 2

### SELECT SYNONYMS

To come up with a comprehensive list of synonyms, use a reference work such as a thesaurus or an encyclopedia. Remember to include spelling variations (e.g., neighbour/neighbor, optimise/optimize), and spell out acronyms and abbreviations. Keep in mind that terms may have changed over time and may differ across different sociocultural contexts.

If you find a relevant source (e.g., article, book chapter etc.), look at its references and see what keywords and terms are used. Include narrower or wider terms.

- **AI**, Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, robotics
- **Women**, woman, female, girl, gender
- **Workplace**, work, employment, job, industry, career, profession

## CONSTRUCTING A SEARCH

# 3

Use the synonyms in a variety of combinations to search [the Library's Databases](#) and [Catalogue](#) .

AI + employment + female

Job + Woman + Artificial Intelligence

Women + workplace + machine learning

Robotics + girl + career

# 4

## ADVANCED SEARCH

For advanced searching tips, see the guides [Searching the Library](#) and [Searching Databases](#). We also have specific guides for [Using Google Scholar](#) and [Using Web of Science](#).

## TIPS



Research is a discovery process! Don't be afraid to experiment, explore, and [Ask a Librarian](#) for help if you need it.

[The Research Tracker template](#) is an excellent resource to use to keep track of your searches. Download a copy to your device to edit and save.

## KEEPING NOTES



Create a folder or use a notebook or journal to support your progress. It may include a critical thinking record to support your development as a critical thinker on your research question, a list of sources consulted, keywords used, concepts, historical references.

## OTHER RESOURCES

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- Bernard, D., Bobish, G., Hecker, J., Holden, I., Hosier, A., Jacobson, T., Loney, T., & Bullis, D. (2014). Plan: Developing research strategies. In The information literacy user's guide: An open, online textbook.
- O'Leary, Z. (2022). Research questions. Sage Campus. To begin, you must create an account in Sage Campus using your EUI login details.
- Research Tracker template [link to downloadable template]
- UCL Library Services. (2022). Planning your search: Defining search terms.

## DEFINITIONS

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**Catalogue:** a list of all the books, articles, resources, print and digital, that exist in the library. A catalogue shows where resources are located and how to access them.

**Database:** an organised collection of a large amount of information in a computer system that can be accessed electronically; in the library, databases store research resources.

**Keyword:** a word typed into a computer to find information that contains that word.

**Synonym:** a word or phrase that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language.

## NEXT STEPS Searching Databases



\* Definitions adapted from: Cambridge University Press. (2022). Cambridge dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>