# Article Indexes & Databases search worksheet

1. **Define your question**  
   - Your topic should be fairly specific.  
   
   **Search Topic:**

2. **Analyse your topic into concepts**  
   - Usually 2 or 3 concepts give the best results.  
   
   **Concept A**  
   **Concept B**  
   **Concept C**

3. **Choose database(s)**  
   - Look in the Article Indexes list under the Subject Guide for your discipline to find the most relevant databases.  
   
   **Databases choices:**

4. **Choose descriptors or subject headings applicable in this database.**  
   - Combine synonyms *within* a concept group with **OR**. Combine different concepts with **AND**.  
   - Different databases may have different subject headings for the same concept.  
   - In databases that don’t use descriptors or subject headings, or when you can’t find a subject heading for the concept, use **keywords**.  
   - When using keywords, remember to search for synonyms, spelling variations (British vs. American), plurals, etc.  
   
   **Concept A**  
   **Concept B**  
   **Concept C**

5. **Limit your retrieval**  
   - If you’re getting too many hits, try using the limits to narrow your results.  
   - Some databases allow you to limit by date, by age group, by publication type, by language etc.  
   
   **Limit options:**

**Helpful Tips:**  
- The scope note feature is often useful in finding out the definitions of subject headings.  
- Take note of and use the subject headings used in the articles you find most relevant to build better searches on your topic.  
- In some databases, you can use subheadings and the focus/major topic feature to further narrow your subject headings.
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