Planning a search strategy
Developing a search strategy will save you time and help you find more relevant information

Creating a search statement
- Identify the main concepts in your assignment topic
- Develop a list of keywords, narrower terms, broader terms, phrases, and concepts that will be important to your research
- Think of synonyms or related terms to make sure you don’t miss relevant information
- If you aren’t sure, start with one of the online encyclopedias

Identify the information you need
- Definitions – use dictionaries and glossaries
- Background information – use items on your reading list, dictionaries
- Current research – use journal articles, dissertations, conference proceedings etc.
- Use the library subject guides to find relevant databases

- The type of information you need will depend on your assignment topic
- Consider if currency is an issue. The length of your assignment will dictate the number of resources you consult

Construct a search statement
- Join the keywords together in a search statement
- To combine keywords use logical operators such as AND, OR etc. or use the search interface available in the database.
- Truncating with * after the stem will give you variations of the word
- Phrase searching – use question marks if you want to search for an exact phrase or a name “Toni Morrison”
- Keep a systematic record of the search terms and searches or use the “History” function in the database. Revise your strategy if necessary

If you have too many search results you can either:
- Add another keyword using the logical operator AND
- Use more specific keywords e.g., written communication instead of communication
- Limit your search by year of publication or language

If you have too few search results you can either:
- Broaden your search by adding alternative terms using the operator OR
- Truncating the keywords to find variant forms of the word
- Use broader terms in place of specific terms or try another database
Identify the best source of information

- Library catalogue or "OneSearch"
- Research databases, use the subject guides
- Research publications from Swedish universities, Diva [www.diva-portal.org](http://www.diva-portal.org)
- Student theses, Uppsök [www.uppsok.se](http://www.uppsok.se)
- Search engines, Google Scholar, [http://scholar.google.se](http://scholar.google.se)

Research databases - English

- MLA – Modern Language Association. Bibliographic database with abstracts and also articles in full text. Literature science, linguistics etc.
- LLBA, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts. Covers all aspects if the study of language including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Include journal articles, book reviews, books, book chapters, dissertations and working papers
- ERIC, Bibliographic database. Pedagogics
- MUSE, Project Muse providing full-text online access from more than 300 journals
- JSTORE, archive of important scholarly journals

What is a scholarly journal article?

A peer reviewed original article usually follows a specific formula, where the following elements are included:

- **Abstract**
  In an abstract a short summary presents aim, method, results and conclusions. To this are keywords usually added that identifies the contents of the article.

- **Introduction**
  The article usually starts with a general background. Purpose and problems are presented as well as the limits of the study.

- **Method and material**
  In the method chapter, the methods and material used are described. The description should be detailed and thorough, so that other researchers may be able to assess the reliability and credibility and if wanted, repeat the research based on this.

- **Results**

- **Discussion/Conclusions**
  In the discussion chapter the presented results are evaluated. Methodological considerations are discussed, as well as the way the results relate to earlier research within the same area.

- **References**
  All cited documents included in the article must be found in the reference list.

Karlstad University Library [http://www.kau.se/bibliotek](http://www.kau.se/bibliotek)