Search strategy

(Searching information on a specific subject)

1. Summarize your topic
2. Select your keywords
3. Identify synonyms and alternative keywords
4. Link keywords and phrases
5. Evaluate results

These steps will be dealt with in the following screens.
1. Summarize your topic

Identify the core idea.

For example:

There are many factors that influence the attitude of children towards the church. Distinguish these factors, and formulate a hypothesis of how to positively influence the relationship between the church and children.

Core idea:
Attitude of children towards the church
2. Select your keywords

The attitude of children towards the church

Use children and church when you search for information on a database.
Search strategy – Step 3

3. Identify synonyms and alternative keywords

- children / youth / teenagers / adolescents
- church / congregation

Although not synonyms, it will give you similar useful results.
Search strategy – Step 4

4. Links keywords and phrases

Use Boolean operators

**OR** Identify synonyms/similar terms
e.g. children or youth or teenagers or adolescents

**AND** Combine two search terms
e.g. children and church

**NOT** Reduce results through elimination
e.g. (church* not Churchill); (Africa not “African American”)

(children or youth or teenagers or adolescents) and
(church or congregation) not Churchill
Search strategy – Step 4 cont.

Manipulate your search terms

• **Truncation with * **
  - Plurals
    e.g. church* = church / churches
  - Flexions
    e.g. pray* = pray / prayer / praying/ prayed

• **Different spellings**
  honour/honor
  counselling/counseling
  evangelisation/evangelization
Search strategy – Step 4 cont.

Search a **phrase between double inverted commas**

To search for words only adjacent to each other:
“luke acts” "new testament" “missio dei”

To find a journal article:
“Ordinary theology as narratives”
Search strategy – Step 4 final

Final search string:

(child* or youth or teen* or adolescen*)
and
(church* or congregation*)
not
churchill*
5. Evaluate results

Too many results
- Add additional keywords
- Limit results by document type, date or subject
- Conduct search in particular fields (e.g. title or abstract)

Too few results
- Check spelling
- Remove some of the keywords
- Try alternate keywords and phrases
- Try alternate databases

(Refer to “How to search on EbscoHost”.)