

Know Your Topic.

- Start with a few simple words describing your topic.

First Search: Keywords

- Keywords are any words associated with a book or article.
 - All internet search engines use keyword searches.
 - A keyword can be the title, author, or any word in the text.
 - Keyword searches will return the most hits, but will have the smallest number of relevant hits.
- Keywords will include all definitions of a word.
 - For example, a keyword search for “dreams” would include scientific information on dreams, speeches where people mentioned dreams, and works by authors named Dream.

Second Search: Subjects

- Subjects are assigned descriptions. They describe what the text is actually about.
- Subjects are assigned by information professionals, so the subjects will always be accurate.
- Subject searches will produce fewer hits, but almost all of them will be relevant.
- Subjects can use very specific words to describe topics. Ask a librarian for help with the words that would describe your topic in particular.

Help! There’s Too Much Information

- If you are using a keyword search and have gotten too many hits back, try adding more words to your search.
 - If you use a keyword search for something like “play,” it will return a large number of hits. For example, you might get information about theatre plays, children at play, and playing an instrument all from the same search.

Help! There’s Not Enough Information.

- If you are searching and have not gotten enough hits, try removing some of the words from your search.
- Try using different words to describe your topic. If you cannot think of any different words to describe it, try using a thesaurus to look some up.
 - You can find a thesaurus in the Reference section. For a general thesaurus, look in the PE Call Numbers. If you need a thesaurus for specialized language, check the library catalog.
- Ask a librarian for help with broadening your search.