

HOW TO START A SEARCH

1. Don't just type your assignment question into the search box! Stop and think about it. First, break it down into three or four key concepts.

Take the question: *"How can we measure the sustainability of cities?"*

There are three concepts in this question: **measure**, **sustainability**, and **cities**. (The other words in the question are there to guide your thinking. You don't need to search for them in a database.) Usually there will be between two and four concepts in an assignment.

2. But... authors might not use these exact words in their writing. Think of synonyms for each concept:

<i>measure</i> evaluate quantify estimate	<i>sustainability</i> green ecofriendly	<i>city</i> urban town metropolis
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Tips:

- Use a thesaurus to help you think of different words.
- If you can find an encyclopaedia article (e.g. on Wikipedia) this may have useful words to use.
- Some concepts might not have any synonyms to use.

3. Some authors might write about "sustainability" but others might write "sustainable". Some may use "evaluate" and others use "evaluation". Instead having to think of all the variations, you can use an asterisk (*) after the base of the word.

e.g. typing: *measur**
 searches for: measure
measures
measurement
measurements
measuring
 etc

4. Link synonyms using **OR**. Link concepts using **AND**.
 - **OR** means "search for any of these words" and finds any result with at least one of the words.
 - **AND** means "search for all of these words" and only finds results that have all of the words.

5. Write your search string:

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measur* OR evaluat* OR quantif* OR estimat* ← first concept
AND
sustainab* OR green ← second concept
AND
city OR cities OR urban* OR town* OR metropol* ← third concept
  
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6. Now you can go to a database and start searching!
7. As you search, write down any new ideas or words that you encounter. Then go back to step 2 and add them in and start a new search. Also take note of any words that aren't helping your search and take them out.

Need help? Contact us:

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Finding key concepts and synonyms - examples

Discuss the causes of child poverty in New Zealand

<i>causes</i> reasons contributions solutions	<i>child</i> youth young people children	<i>poverty</i> socioeconomic disparity socioeconomic inequality low income poor	<i>New Zealand</i> nz kiwi Aotearoa
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- Sometimes you can try an opposite word, e.g. “solutions” under “causes”, because looking for solutions means you need to know what causes something

How is the media used for propaganda in North Korea?

<i>media</i> journalism reporters TV newspaper social media blog	<i>propaganda</i> promotion advocacy manipulation public relations indoctrination disinformation	<i>North Korea</i> Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Pyongyang
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- If you are studying a certain area, e.g. North Korea, then you can search for information on major cities or regions, e.g. Pyongyang.

Discuss attitudes to immigration amongst New Zealanders

<i>attitudes</i> opinions reactions beliefs perceptions responses	<i>immigration</i> immigrant migrant refugee	<i>New Zealanders</i> NZ Aotearoa kiwi
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What are the issues of slave labour in India?

<i>slave labour</i> sweatshops bonded labour forced labour indentured labourers	<i>India</i> Hyderabad Delhi	
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- Doing a quick search on the internet can be a good way to find other terms, like “indentured labourers”, that you might not have known.
- When searching for information about a country it may also be useful to search for major cities or regions within that country.

Discuss Asian tourists’ perspectives of New Zealand eco-tourism.

<i>Asian</i> Japanese Chinese Taiwanese	<i>perspectives</i> attitudes opinions perceptions	<i>New Zealand</i> Kaikoura Fiordland Queenstown	<i>eco-tourism</i> sustainable tourism green tourism eco-friendly tourism
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- Narrowing down the scope of an assignment can help. E.g. Instead of covering all Asian tourists, focus on Chinese or Japanese. Or instead of covering all NZ tourism, pick a particular area.