



**# 2: Arming
 Yourself with
 Search Terms**

Library Website: <http://library.clackamas.edu>

Reference Assistance: (503)657-6958 x2290

The most successful search terms (keywords) for a topic will vary from one research tool to another, so before getting started, take a few minutes to develop a good supply of keywords.

Be aware that **broader terms** often work best for finding books and reference materials in **library catalogs**, while **narrower terms** often give better results in **article indexes**.

For good results in electronic search tools, **match your keywords** to the **subject headings** they use. As you find relevant items, be alert for any subject headings shown, and use those terms to improve your results.

Break your topic down into two or three key **concepts** to explore.

For each, write down any **synonyms**, **broader terms** or **narrower terms** you can think of.

[Example: for the topic “dealing with the obesity epidemic in America,” key concepts might include *obesity*, *United States*, *treatment*, *food industry*, etc. For *treatment*, a synonym would be *therapy*, a broader term would be *medicine*, and a narrower term would be *surgery*.]

A *thesaurus* or the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* may be helpful – ask at the Reference Desk!

State your research topic / question:

	Concept #1:	Concept #2:	Concept #3:
Synonyms			
Broader Terms			
Narrower terms			

As you progress through the term paper exercises and find more terms, add them to your list!