# Constructing a search strategy

Use this guide to help you plan your literature search

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| **Step 1: Define your topic**  Write your search question below:  Remember to choose a topic that is neither too broad nor too narrow. |

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| **Step 2: Choose your keywords**  Look at your search question; what are the most important words? Write them below: |

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| **Step 3: Identify alternative terminology**  Think of alternative terms for your keywords:  Think about synonyms, acronyms, American terminology and alternative spellings. What bigger topics does your topic fit into, and what smaller topics belong to it? |

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| **Step 4: Choose your type of material**  Look back at your question. What sort of resources would be most useful for you to read? (e.g. journal articles, newspapers, statistics, videos etc.) |

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| **Step 5: Limiting**  Write the ways in which you might limit your search if you retrieve too many results:  How far back do you want to search? Do you only want articles with a UK focus? Could you use any of the ‘smaller topics’ you identified in step 3 to get a shorter list of results? |

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| **Step 6: Choose your databases and websites**  Write a list of some of the databases and websites you think would be good for searching for this topic. |

Once you have followed all these steps you are now ready to go and try out your search. For more advice or help, please visit <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/library/subject-help/criminology/>

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