Locating Evidence: A Guide for Students

Use **keywords**

Entire sentences/phrases will extend your search too much and not give very specific results.

Follow these steps to identify key words for your topic.

1. What is your topic?

*Is there a link between soil pH and plant types found in sand dunes?*

1. What are the main themes in the topic?

*Soil pH* and *plant types in sand dunes*

1. What keywords are related to these ideas? Consider what words would be most useful when you are reading about your topic.

*Soil acidity / alkaline soil / coastal vegetation / dune vegetation / dune plants*

1. Try using these keywords in your search. If you find a useful article, look at the *tags* or keywords used to classify the article. You may get some new ideas.

**Search Tips**

There are some easy ways that you can refine your search.

1. Don’t use articles or pronouns. Often searches will ignore these words. Use content words like verbs and nouns.
2. Use “ “ (quotation marks). This will search for the exact phrase within the quotation marks.
3. Try using searches with keywords +association / +research /+institute / +database. This may narrow the results to information from these places.

*e.g. coastal vegetation +association* will return results containing the words ‘*coastal vegetation’* from only associations

1. Use + or -. This will include or exclude a particular word,

*e.g. Soil pH +dune* or *Soil pH –desert*

1. define:*keyword* will often produce a definition in most search engines.
2. link:URL will search for linked sites in most search engines.
3. related:[URL] will search for similar sites in most search engines.