

## How to search

To make searching for sources a more manageable task, work through the following four simple steps:

### How to search – the steps

#### 1 Search the library catalogues

- Try synonyms (similar words that stand for the same thing), like ‘renewable resources’, ‘sustainability’ and ‘ecological balance’
- Try changing the spelling of keywords, particularly those like ‘anaesthesia’, for which there are different American and British English spellings
- If you’re still not getting many hits, find an article that deals with a similar topic, look at the terms used to describe it and use them yourself
- If that doesn’t help, look at review articles that summarise the literature on your topic
- If there are no helpful review articles, start with the most recent issues of journals and look for studies about your topic, then find the references at the end of the articles for more sources to examine
- Then look at conference papers, which often report the latest research developments
- And, if all that fails, contact authors of relevant studies and ask them if they know of studies that might be helpful to you. Most authors are very willing to help

#### 2 Check there’s enough up-to-date material

- Look around catalogue location numbers
- Regularly browse along the same shelves throughout your research
- Check regularly for articles in new editions of the most relevant journals
- Register for RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds and email alerts for updates on websites and new publications
- Ask for help from your librarians
- Check university library web pages

#### 3 Search the internet

- General search engines
- Specialised databases
- Open access sources
- University libraries
- Expert advice

#### 4 Check the reliability of your sources

- What are the author’s credentials? Is he or she well-respected in the field?
- How accurate is the document?
- How up-to-date is the document?
- Who publishes it?
- Can you detect bias?
- Are there reliable signs of the quality of the document?



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- *What do others say about the page and the site?*
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For more information, see *How to Write Your Literature Review*, Chapters 6 and 7.