IDENTIFY EFFECTIVE KEYWORD SEARCH TERMS
Unlike Google, most of the research databases available through the Seattle University Library do not understand natural language very well. Typing an entire sentence, or even just a long, multi-word phrase into a database search engine is unlikely to generate many useful results on your topic.

Instead, take a moment to identify some keywords that describe the main ideas or concepts in your research question or topic. Then take another moment to brainstorm some additional keywords. These might include synonyms or other terms related to your first keywords. It may also be useful to use Google or even Wikipedia to “pre-search” your topic - i.e. to get a better sense of the language/terminology that others have used, when writing about your topic.

Example:
Research question: Does human generated noise bother marine animals?
Sample keyword search terms: noise, marine, animals

BOOLEAN SEARCH LOGIC
Boolean search logic was invented by George Boole, a 19th century mathematician. Boolean connecting terms include AND, OR, and NOT. Use them to refine your search results by connecting multiple search terms.

AND narrows your search. Use AND to combine search terms to reduce the size of your results list, and to generate more specific search results.
Example: noise AND marine animals

OR expands your search. Use OR to include synonyms or related terms in your search.
Example: marine OR ocean
Example: girl OR female OR woman

NOT refines your search by excluding. Use NOT to exclude homographic terms (words spelled the same but that mean something different) or subcategories of topics that aren’t relevant
Example: desert NOT Sonoran
Example: dogs NOT poodles
Example: smoke NOT nicotine

NESTING uses brackets to combine different Boolean operators in one search.
Example: (smoking OR nicotine) AND cancer

OTHER SEARCH STRATEGIES
TRUNCATION uses the * symbol to search for words with the same room.
Example: biol* retrieves biology, biologist, biological ...

QUOTATION MARKS help you find an exact phrase. Use to search for an article title.
Example: “Metal-Mediated and Metal-Catalyzed Reactions of Isocyanides”
Example: “Seattle Running Club”

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