# Web Search Strategies

**Before you search…**

1- **Write down words and phrases** you know are related to the topic.
2- **Add synonyms** for those key words.  Consider using **thesaurus.com** to find additional synonyms.
3- If there are a number of variations on the same word or phrase, write down the **stem** of the word and add * to replace the part of the word/phrase that changes.  This kind of search is called a wildcard search.  You can also use it if there are alternate spellings for a word in your search term.
   a. **EXAMPLE:   librar\* returns library, libraries, librarian, etc.**
      **EXAMPLE:   colo\*r returns color (American spelling) and colour (British spelling)**
4- Consider using multiple search engines.  **Google** locates results identified by computer programs while subject directories like **Yahoo** search collections assembled by human beings.

**As you search…**

5- **Be as specific as possible**, using nouns rather than adjectives or adverbs.  The better your search terms are, the better your results will be.
6- **Begin your search with the most important word** or phrase first.  Additional search terms can follow.
7- If you want the search to look for results that use the exact words you provide as a group, put them in **"quotation marks."**
8- If you want the search to return results that include all terms you provide, use **AND** between each search term.
9- If you want to eliminate results that include a particular word or phrase, use **NOT** before those words.
10- **Don't capitalize** your search terms, even if they are names.  Results may be limited to those with capital letters.

**After you search…**

11- **Avoid obvious ads** and commercial sites (unless you have a reason for selecting them.)
12- **Right-click on the result** you want to open. This will open the page in another tab so you can always get back to your results page.
13- Confirm that the search is helpful by using **Ctrl-F** to find the search term in the text of the webpage.
14- Look for signs the resource is credible.  More on this later.