

Creating Research Question & Effective Search Assignments

The table below explains how to reduce a broad research question to a focused research question and then to a workable set of search terms. See how the questions develop below, then use the blank form to develop your own research question and search terms.

Note that * is a wildcard that assumes any ending. For instance, Educat* could retrieve educate, education, educated, education, educating, etc. See the handout on Boolean Searching for additional help.

Broad Topic	Narrowed	Narrowed Further	Research Question	Search Terms
Pollution	Acid rain	Acid rain and coal	What is the relationship between acid rain and coal-fired power?	Acid rain AND coal AND power plants
Fishing	Commercial fishing	Fishing regulations and New England	What impact do fishing regulations have on commercial fishing in New England?	Fishing regulations AND commerc* AND New England
Recycling	Recycling cans and bottles	Recycling cans and bottle in Maine	How has Maine's law concerning the recycling of cans and bottles worked out in its 20+ year history?	Recycling AND maine AND bottle* AND law
Bullying	Bullying in U.S. schools	Bullying of gay people in U.S. schools	What is being done in U.S. schools to deal with the bullying of gay students?	Bully* AND (gay* OR lesbian*) AND school* AND united states

Experiment with your own possible topics below.

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