To be able to search more efficiently and effectively can challenging if you are not sure of where or what to start your search. Here are some tips to get you started:

- **Allow enough time** for your research. Do not leave your research until the last minute.
- **Analyse your assignment** question by reading it thoroughly, and extracting the key things (keywords) of what the assignment asking you to do.
- **Begin with a brainstorm.** It is a great way to sort out your thoughts and ideas, as well identifying the gaps in your knowledge. Brainstorm more keywords by using synonyms of your keywords for the search.
- **Be careful with web-based research.** Sometimes, it is fine to use Wikipedia or other online resources to give you a bit of an introduction or background information on a topic. However, you need to be careful when using the internet to research for more academic resources. See Evaluating sources.
- **Look out for words with alternative spelling** such as colour (British English spelling) and color (American English spelling). Some search tools will automatically find both spellings, but some will not.
- **Phrase searching.** To be able to get more relevant or useful results:
  - you need your keywords to stick together in the exact order e.g. food habits.
  - you may need to enclose the words in quotation marks (" ") to create a search for the exact phrase e.g. “consumer behaviour”. This works best for two or three words.
- **Use the Boolean Operators AND (also + or &), OR, and NOT (also -)** in search terms to specify logical relationships between terms. It is to broaden or narrow your search term/s. For example:
  - Food AND habits AND Australian (Australian food habits)
  - Heritage OR dark tourism (either heritage and dark tourism)
  - Gambling AND issues NOT addiction (gambling issues excludes addiction)
- **Use wildcard symbols.** Wild card is a symbol you can use either in the middle or at the end of a word to catch any alternate spelling options for that word.
  - Most common wildcard symbols are a question mark (?) or an asterisk (*).
    - Using the asterisk (*) for finding both singular or plural forms of a word e.g. work* for work, works.
    - Using the asterisk (*) for finding words that begin with the root e.g. manag* for manage, manager, managing, managerial.
    - Using the question mark (?) for finding words spelled in different ways e.g. orgni?ation for organisation, organization.
- **Know your limits.** Most search tools ie. Library catalogue or databases platforms let you limit your results in a range of ways such as material types, publication date, peer-reviewed journal articles...etc. Use these tools to focus your results to only the content you need. It is important to limit your search to what you need or your assignment required.
- **Ask a librarian.** Your librarian is there for a reason as finding information on the catalogue or databases can be very confusing or overwhelming, if you are not used to using them. Don't be afraid to go and ask your librarians for help and they should be able to point you in the right direction.
- **Check your reference lists of the resources** you find as they may have other useful resources which you can extend your searches.