Thinking Tool: Choosing a Topic and Search Terms

1. What is your assignment?
   How long is your paper? How many sources do you need? What kind?

2. What is your main idea?
   This doesn’t have to be your final choice of topic. It’s a place to start.

3. Concept Cloud
   Write down anything related to your main idea. Anything!

4. Keywords:
   Choose a group of words that might go together.

5. Your search terms:
   2-4 keywords

Remember: Add or subtract keywords to get different results. Pick different ones! Start with a new main idea! Try different databases!

Other ways to refine your search:
- time period: last 5 yrs, last 10 years, 2001, the 90s, 19th century etc.
- location: city, state, region, country, world, urban vs. rural, 3rd world, etc.
- demographics = population: age, gender, race, education level, economic status