

What will this guide do for me?

Help me clarify my topic	Save me time
Help me the right words to search with	Uncover arguments for and against
Prepare me for the debate itself	Enable the librarian to assist me quickly

1) Find the words.

Words are key. Topics may be expressed in general terms (e.g.: *should public transportation be free?*) but people write using a variety of terms. You should identify specific words or phrases that describe your topic. (e.g. *free public transit, free public transport, free fare, zero fare, fares, free ridership*). You'll find different terms while you're researching. Record those words here:

2) Think critically.

You are unlikely to find a single perfect report that fully articulates your side and refutes your opponent's side. **Think critically about what you can use to support your side.** Think about what your opposition will say and how you can refute it. Explore and expand your terms for these questions, just as you did in **section 1**.

Advantages (e.g. *increased ridership? Lessened environmental impact? Increased access to commercial districts?*)

Disadvantages (e.g. *increased taxation? Crowding? Operational sustainability? Impact on the car industry?*)

Existing examples or similar projects (e.g. [Chapel Hill Transit](#), [Island Transit](#), [Halifax Free Shuttle Service](#))

Possible Statistics (e.g. [Transportation Data](#), *Transit Statistics, Mode of Travel, Crime, Economic Indicators*) Think about who collects data.

3) Develop your search strategy

Most databases will search exactly what you've entered in the search box. If you've entered a sentence, the database software will only look for that sentence. Use words and short phrases rather than sentences in your searches. Combine and recombine the terms and concepts you've already identified using AND/OR

- a) Use AND to combine different concepts (*public transport and fares*) when you want more specific results.
- b) Use OR to combine words of similar meaning (*public transit OR public transport OR buses*) when you are not getting good results and you want to expand your results.

4) Start searching

Start exploring the various sources available. Think about who might be interested in writing about your topic. Be aware of biases, author qualifications, date of publication, *etc.*

Article Databases. Use the library's interdisciplinary databases like Academic Search Complete Canadian Newsstand, CBCA, Factiva, Lexis Nexis or Econlit. Newspapers and magazines provide fact, description or opinion. Scholarly articles provide studies and analysis. Record some suggested databases here.

Statistics: Governments are good sources of statistics: Statistics Canada, BC Stats, City of Vancouver. Search on individual web sites or use the domain site search in [google](#) (*e.g. buses site:statcan.gc.ca; pedestrian volumes site:vancouver.ca*)

Government reports. A municipal, provincial, federal or international government agency might have produced a report on your debate topic. Try searching your topic using the domain site search in [google](#): (*e.g. public transit site:parl.gc.ca, free public transit site:tc.gc.ca*)

Associations, Think Tanks, or Companies. Associations, organizations or specific companies also produce reports & opinion pieces. Be aware of the organization's biases if you use its information. Find associations using [google](#) (*e.g. "public transit" association site:ca*)

Public Opinion Polls: What do other people think? Explore databases like [Polling the Nations](#)

Tip: Keep careful notes about the secondary sources you use, so that you can cite them correctly. Many databases, like Business Source Complete, create citations in the style of your choice. For more information on citation styles, please consult UBC Library's [How to Cite](#), [APA](#) or [MLA](#) guides.