

I have a vague idea of what it is I am looking for - something on living in a more environmentally friendly way. I then think carefully about what it really is I'm looking for— there are many ways I could be more environmentally friendly, but the most pressing issue I've heard about in the news lately is about greenhouse gases, and how to reduce your carbon footprint (the amount of greenhouse gases you as a householder cause to be emitted into the environment).

From this, I choose my keywords – carbon footprint, greenhouse gases, reducing. I decide where to look. My whole approach depends on how long I've got and what the information is for. In this instance, the information is for me, for my own personal use, and there is no deadline on when it is needed for, so I will probably start off using a search engine.

If I was preparing a report for work, or an assignment that required me to prepare an in-depth argument, balancing up the pros and cons, I would want to allow more time and try more than one resource – maybe some of the academic resources which we will look at in more detail in a later section - to get a critical mass of material.

Then I search. At this point, I need to assess how my results match up with my original idea, my 'information need'. In this instance, I find a good deal of useful material on the first page of search results. The results match what I'm looking for, so I stop searching.

If, however, the need and the results don't match up – and it might be because I've got too many, too few or the wrong emphasis in my results, I need to think again. I have a number of options at this point. I might refine my search, by either changing keywords – adding, taking away or replacing them. I might check the tool I am using to make sure I am making the most of any advanced features on offer. I might reflect on whether the tool I am using is the right one for the job. I might even have to go right back to the beginning, to my original vague notion and question what it really is I am looking for.