

# START YOUR SEARCH ENGINES!

## **CONCEPT MAPS AND THESIS STATEMENTS**

The key to good Web research is knowing what you want to find out. First, think about your topic. Brainstorm for a list of questions you'd like to answer. Read to find out what is interesting about your topic. Once you have chosen a topic, you are ready to choose keywords for your Web research. Keywords are words that work like a key. They open up the door that leads you to the information you need. Sometimes your keywords will be obvious and other times the search is more complicated. Keywords can also be too broad or too narrow. Keep the concepts as concise as possible.

Concept maps help you come up with ideas for keywords and develop your thinking on a topic. They are not the only way to do this but they have the advantage of being both visual and verbal and they encourage you to link together related thoughts and ideas. They can be a good way to get started by getting some thoughts down on paper very quickly. Starting with a general topic, write the topic or theme in the center of the diagram. In the outside circles, write keywords to use in your search for information.

This is an open-ended, free-wheeling part of your research, so try not to judge your results or rule ideas out. Just get them all down and you can sift through them later.

Write down the topic in a phrase or sentence form (thesis statement). Shaping your keywords helps you clear away unneeded ideas, spot possible gaps and energize your subject. The thesis statement expresses the main idea of your research paper and serves three crucial functions:

1. The thesis statement narrows your subject to a single, central idea.
2. It claims something specific and significant about your subject.
3. It conveys your purpose – often explanatory or argumentative.

Once you have filled in your concept map and developed a thesis statement, you are ready to start your Web search. This assignment can be done on an individual basis or in groups of 2-3 students. Each group will bring back to class a Concept Map and a thesis statement(s).

# BASIC CONCEPT MAP

