

## Chapter 5

# In a Nutshell

When you conduct research, you are finding the relevant facts about the subject. Two strategies are *asking questions* and *using keywords*.

**Ask questions.** Start with predictable primary-level *questions*: How much does it cost? What are its parts? What is the basic concept you need to know? The trick, however, is to ask secondary-level questions that help you establish relationships. Secondary questions include cause (Why does it do this? Why does it cost this much?) and comparison-contrast (How is this like that? Why did it act differently this time?).

**Use keywords.** Type in *keywords*, following search rules, to search all library databases and Web databases. The two basic skills are knowing how to use this database's "search rules" and knowing which *words* to use.

Spend time learning the database "search rules." Typing in one word is easy, but how do you handle combinations—either phrases (municipal waste disposal) or strings (packaging, corrugated, fluting)? All search engines use logical connectors—*and*, *but*, *not*, *or*—in some fashion. "Recycle" *and* "plastic" narrows the results to those that contain both terms; "recycle" *or* "plastic" broadens the results to all those that contain just one of the two terms.

Finding which *words* to use is a matter of educated guesses and observation. "Packaging" is too broad (that is, it will give you too many choices—so many results that you cannot use them), so use "corrugated"; "fluting" (the wavy material in the middle of corrugated cardboard) will yield narrower results.