Planning for a Systematic Review

Develop a focused question
- Patient/Population
- Intervention/Exposure
- Comparison: control, other intervention, gold standard
- Outcome

Appreciate possible sources for bias
- In the studies
  - Publication bias
  - Time lag
  - Multiple publication
  - Citation bias
  - Language
  - Outcome reporting
  - Selection
- In review methodology
  - Unblinded review of studies
  - Doing sub-group analyses after looking at the data

Develop inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Study methodology
- Randomization
- Follow-up
- Language
- Setting
- Published/unpublished studies
- Keep record of included & excluded studies, rationale
- Selection decisions by multiple reviewers
- Plan how to resolve differences

Plan a literature search strategy
- Where are you going to search
  - Major databases
  - Subject/region specific databases
  - Grey literature sources
- How are you going to search?
  - Use published search statements (eg, Cochrane Handbook)
  - Consult a librarian

Plan how to assess the quality of the studies & how to extract the data from the studies
- Consult AHRQ, Cochrane Handbook