

Search Strategy Worksheet

Building a search strategy

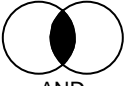

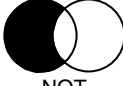
1. Write down a sentence or two about your research topic. For example, "How do adult students fare in an online course environment?"

2. Identify separate issues in your research topic, write them in the boxes, and brainstorm key words and phrases for each issue.

3. Select the best words to use as search terms. Using a thesaurus may help you find the best terms for your topic.
4. Look at your terms and truncate those with a good root (like **psycholog*** for **psychology** or **psychologist(s)**) if you want to search for all variants of a term. Most databases use an asterisk for truncation. Another special character that is often used is the wildcard(!), which replaces one letter at a time (**wom!n** finds both **woman** and **women**).
5. Construct your search phrase(s) using your terms, including Boolean operators like **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**:

Boolean operators: an overview

Boolean searching uses special operators to combine your search terms to either limit or expand your results. Examples of Boolean operators include:

		
AND	OR	NOT
result must include both terms:	result may have either term:	result must have the first term
		without the second:
elder* and legislation	writers or authors	psychology not self help

Many databases default to phrase searching if you enter multiple words in a single search box, (which means that the database will find only those results that have those words in that exact order), so make sure you separate different concepts with a Boolean operator. An **Advanced Search** option will often include these operators in drop-down menus to make them easier to use in the appropriate place. If you have any questions about search strategy, ask a librarian!

Tracking your research

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