

**Research Skills – Developing a Search Strategy**

**Plan a search strategy using your own area of research interest.**

**Topic/question/problem**

Write your topic/question/problem in the box below and underline the key concepts

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**Synonyms**

Write a key concept into each box in the top row, and in the column beneath, list as many synonyms/alternatives you can think of. Remember to include singular/plural, acronyms, newer/older terminology, US/UK spellings/terminology, technical terms.

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**Search Operators**

Look at your synonyms above and consider how you might streamline the search to combine with Boolean operators: AND, OR, NOT.

Be aware of other techniques, such as:

* truncation/word stemming (e.g. therap\*)
* wildcards (e.g. wom?n, \*therapy)
* exact phrase searching “ …” (e.g. “infection control”, “ethnic minority”)
* Word adjacency/ proximity NEAR/n, adj**n** (e.g. cognitive NEAR/2 \*therap\*)

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**Limits**

Think about any limits that might apply to your topic/question/problem.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date range | Language | Material type | Other |
|  |  |  |  |

**Broadening/Narrowing**

Consider how you might broaden/narrow your search if you find too few/too many references

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Broadening search | Narrowing search |
| e.g. think of more synonyms.  Remember to use truncation. | e.g. add more precise concepts.  Apply more limits (e.g. age/gender) |

Now you are ready to start entering your search on the database(s) of your choice.

6 key platforms are:

EBSCO, Engineering Village, Ovid, ProQuest, SCOPUS, Web of Science.   
  
Each offers a range of different subject databases, so your choice will vary depending on your area of research.

Try to be as consistent as possible in the terms and keywords that you use on each database selected.

Remember to keep accurate records of what you have done, and why!

**Further help**

For further help, contact the Research Skills Team in Libraries and Learning Resources

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/research/contact-the-research-skills-team.aspx>