# Research Worksheet

## 1. Topic:

## 2. Search Limits:

### Languages:

### Publication Dates:

### Source Types:
- Books
- Journal Articles
- Peer reviewed only: Yes / No
- Popular Magazine Articles
- Trade Magazine Articles
- News
- Dissertations & Theses
- Statistics & Data
- Conference Papers & Proceedings
- Reports (e.g., Company, Country, Industry)
- Videos & Audio
- Other (specify):

### Other Limits:

## 3. Search Tools:

Use [Discovery, Databases](library.mcmaster.ca) and [Research Guides](library.mcmaster.ca) on the Library’s home page to identify databases and other search tools covering your topic and your search limits.

### Core Search Tools [in a field of study]:

### Secondary Search Tools [in other related fields of study]:

## 4. Search Terms:

Break your topic down into individual concepts.

For each concept develop a list of keywords, synonyms, subject headings and descriptors.

Combine words describing the same or similar concept with OR. Combine different concepts with AND.

Use truncation or wildcard symbols to pick up word variations.

Use quotes “ ” around words to find exact phrases.

Construct a search string using your search terms.

Use parentheses ( ) when using a mix of Boolean operators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept A</th>
<th>Concept B</th>
<th>Concept C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
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</table>

## 5. Search Results:

### Search Tool:

### Date:

### # Results:

### Notes:
† Concepts
To develop a list of words for each concept in your topic ...

- check citations, abstracts, articles and bibliographies to identify terms used by authors writing in the field
- review subject headings, descriptors and thesaurus terms used for the topic in catalogues, databases and other search tools
- continue to add words that come up frequently in your searching

‡‡ Combining Words using Boolean Operators - AND, OR, NOT

- **AND** = all of these words
  - example: communication and organizations
  - results will include all stated words
  - narrows search
- **OR** = any of these words
  - example: salary or compensation or income
  - results will include at least one of the stated words
  - broadens search
- **NOT** = none of these words
  - example: galaxy not phone
  - results will exclude stated word(s) following NOT
  - narrows search
  - use the NOT operator with extreme caution since it may result in the inadvertent loss of relevant results; there may be items that include both the wanted and unwanted terms and all would be eliminated from the results if the NOT operator is used

- ( ) use parentheses when including more than one Boolean operator in a single search string
  - ensures stated words are combined and processed in the order intended
    - o without parentheses search terms will automatically be processed from left to right; the AND operator will be processed before the OR operator, and the NOT operator will be processed last
    - o to change the natural order of operations, place parentheses around words using the OR operator so that anything enclosed within parentheses is processed first; example: recruitment and (teachers or professors or instructors)

‡‡‡ Truncation or Wildcard Symbols ...

- can vary depending on the search tool being used; the asterisk * is the most common, but a dollar sign $ or question mark ? are often used as well; check the help section of your database or search tool to determine which symbol to use
- can be used to find word variations in a single search
  - manag* finds manage, management, managing, manager, managerial, etc.
  - labo*r finds both labor [U.S. spelling] and labour [British/Canadian spelling]
  - wom*n finds both woman [singular] and women [plural]
  - choose the placement of the symbol carefully, to avoid irrelevant results
    - o for example, man* will find manage and management, as well as man, manic, manufacture, Manitoba and other unintended words
    - o if truncation proves problematic, spell out the desired word variations in full using the Boolean operator OR between them, e.g., manage or management
- typically broadens a search