Research Worksheet

Topic

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:

Search Tools

Use Discovery, Databases and Research Guides 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]:

Search Terms

- Break your topic down into individual concepts.
- For each concept develop a list of synonyms, keywords, subject headings and descriptors.†
- Combine words describing the same 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.
Concept A:  search word OR another search word ...

AND

Concept B:  search word OR another search word ...

AND

Concept C:  search word OR another search word ...

• Construct a search string using your search terms.
• Use parentheses ( ) when using a mix of Boolean operators.††

Search Results

Search Tool:
Date:
# Results:
Notes:

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Date:
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Notes:

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Date:
# Results:
Notes:
**†Concepts**

To develop a list of words for each concept of your topic ...  
- check citations, abstracts, articles and bibliographies to identify terms used by authors writing in the field  
- review the 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 with extreme caution since the NOT operator 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
    - **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  
    - 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 search tool to determine which symbol to use
- can be used to find word variations in a single search
  - manag* finds manage, management, 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
    - for example, man* will find manage and management, as well as man, manic, manufacture, Manitoba and other unintended words
    - if truncation proves problematic, spell out the desired word variations in full using the Boolean operator OR between them, for example: manage or management
- typically broadens a search

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