

Building a Search Strategy

1. Write down a phrase or two about your research topic. It can be in the form of a statement or a question.
Ex: How do adult students fare in an online course environment? OR adult learning principles

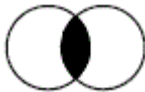


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2. Identify separate issues or concepts in your research topic, write them in the boxes, and brainstorm key words and phrases for each. For example: adult students as one, and online course as another.

3. Select the best words to use as search terms. Thinking of words that have the same meaning or 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:

 <p>AND</p> <p>Result must include both terms: elder* AND legislation</p>	 <p>OR</p> <p>Result may have either term: writers OR authors</p>	 <p>NOT</p> <p>Result must have first term without second: psychology NOT "self help"</p>
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Tracking Your Research

As you search different databases and try new search terms, keep a log of what you've done to keep from repeating fruitless searches and to record the most effective search strategies.

Date	Database	Search terms	# of hits