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Constructing a Search Strategy

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Constructing a Search Strategy

What is a search strategy? It helps you become more consciously aware of your research process, it helps to organize and track your research, making you a more efficient and effective researcher.

Step 1: Understanding your topic

Summarize your research topic in one sentence or write it as a question. Circle key words or phrases

Step 2: Brainstorm additional keywords & search terms

List any additional words or phrases, and group related terms together

- Additional keywords may be synonyms, broader/narrower terms, related concepts, alternative spellings...
- Consider where you might use a *wildcard* or *truncation* to adjust your search. For example, wildcards make searching alternative spellings easier. Searching 'colo?r' will give me results for both 'color' and 'colour'. Truncation, or using an asterisk at the end of the word means that searching for 'librar*' will give me results for 'library', 'librarian', and 'libraries'.

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4

Step 3: Construct possible search statements

Link the search terms using AND, OR, NOT

AND – narrows a search

OR – broadens a search

NOT – excludes terms

- Use quotation marks to search for exact phrases, ex. " "
- Use parentheses to combine your searches effectively
- Remember a search statement that is very effective in one database, may not be equally effective in another. Try lots of different options!

Ex. (rat) OR (mouse) AND Cheese

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Step 4: Choose method to track your research

Will you use a citation manager like [Zotero or Mendeley](#)? Will you track what sources you found and where you found them in a spreadsheet or a word do? Do you prefer to take notes by hand? There is no wrong answer! Whatever method, or combination works best for you.

Step 5: Consider the scope of your research

Scope	examples	rationale
Type of source:		
Date range:		
Geographical coverage:		
Other:		

Step 6: Choose where to search

List several of the resources you plan to explore in your research. You can add to this list as you go, note which resources were particularly useful or which were not helpful at all, and check them off once you've finished searching so you don't end up repeating your steps.

Resources may include: various databases, the title of a specific journal, google scholar, relevant primary sources, etc... If you don't know where to start, visit the relevant [Subject Guide](#)

Additional Resources:

- **The Knowledge Market:** get help from fellow students, make a virtual appt. here: <https://www.gvsu.edu/library/km/>
- **Meet with a Librarian:** set up an appointment with this [form](#), or email me at dierkina@gvsu.edu
- **Other online services:** <https://www.gvsu.edu/library/library-online-services-88.htm>