Searching Basics

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The Search Strategy

- Develop question
- Identify keywords and terms from question
- Identify standardized subject headings
- Combine subject headings and keywords to narrow or broaden your search
- Evaluate your search results
- Revise the search in light of your results
Pulling Keywords from Your PICO Question

- What are the main topics of your question?
- Brainstorm – what other words could you use to describe your topic?
- What are some synonyms for the words you’ve come up with?
Evaluate the Search Results

- Don’t be afraid if you have zero (0) or thousands of results, play around with search strategies – you won’t break anything!
  - Read the titles and abstracts of “hits” in your search to get a feel for their relevance
  - Identify relevant Subject Terms and Keywords used to index particularly relevant “hits”
  - If your search yields too many or too few hits, modify it and try again
Revise the Search in Light of your Results

- Narrow the search by combining search terms and applying limits

- Broaden the search if the results are too limited by removing keywords and limits
Boolean

- AND
- OR
- NOT
strawberry OR vanilla OR chocolate
strawberry AND vanilla AND chocolate
(strawberry OR vanilla) NOT chocolate
BEYOND BOOLEAN
(TRUNCATION AND WILD CARDS)

- **Truncation** is a searchable shortened form of a word.
  - `adolescenc*` will cover
    - adolescence
    - Adolescent
    - adolescents, etc...

- Wild card characters are useful because of alternate spellings and other quirks in the English language.
  - `behavio?r` will cover
    - behaviour
    - behavior
  - `Wom*n` should pick up
    - women
    - woman
Quotation Marks

Using quotation marks for a phrase forces the database to return results where those words appear together.

Without Quotations = 57,360 results

With Quotations = 13,180 results
Need Help?

Contact a librarian, we are here to help!

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