Search Strategy Worksheet

“Quick-and-easy” search method

Preparation: Think about or consider the following before you type in order to analyze the concepts.

1. What would be the title of your search?
Search Title:

2. Which words represent the constituting elements for your subject?
Search Terms

3. Which element is most vital (and which next vital)?
Most vital search element: ..........................................................................................................................
Second most vital search element: ..................................................................................................................
Third most vital search element: ....................................................................................................................
Other vital search elements: ..........................................................................................................................

4. Compose a simple query using a few important terms linked by ‘AND’ or ‘OR’ operators
Use quotation marks “...” for adjacent words or two or more words that make up a single concept (e.g. “attention deficit disorder”) and truncation * for words with the same stem. (e.g. work* for work, works, worker, working etc.)

5. The search engine or database will give lists of records. Reduce the number of records displayed and increase relevancy by restricting them according to publication date, etc.
Click on “Show abstracts” to view more details of a document in your results list.
6. Print complete records retrieved.
*Click on “Full Text” or SFX button for a link to full text and other library services.*

**“Building Blocks” approach**

*Preparation: Determine the main elements or concepts associated with your problem in somewhat more detail than in the “Quick-and-easy” approach.*

1. Write your problem down in a sentence

Search Title:

2. Write down words that constitute the basic concepts of the research question.

3. Think of synonyms or alternatives for these words. Write these words under the correspondent concepts

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<th>Concept 1</th>
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<th>Concept 3</th>
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4. Formulate queries based on the concept groups, using the operator “OR” between synonyms, using controlled or free vocabulary using the alternatives for words either sparingly or as many as possible at the same time. Retrieve individual result sets for each concept group

First block:

Second block

Third block

5. Combine retrieved sets with Boolean operators (mostly AND) and build a final set that is the final solution for the whole search
“Pearl growing” approach

Preparation: Begin with a specific document or document set that is known to be relevant (the “pearl”).

1. Use the characteristics of the “pearl” to grow a set of related documents successively: Use assigned index terms, title or text words, author names, citations, publication data etc, to formulate queries to retrieve subsequent sets of results

Characteristic words found in the “pearl”