# Constructing a search strategy

Use this guide to help you plan your database search

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| **Step 1: Define your topic**Write your search question or topic below  |

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| **Step 2: Choose your keywords**Look at your search question; what are the key themes of your topic? These are your initial keywords. Write them below: |

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| **Step 3: Identify alternative keywords**Think of alternative terms for your keywords. Think about synonyms, similar words, variant spellings. Remember, **truncation** (\*) will find alternative word endings.  |

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| **Step 4: Combining your keywords**Combine your keywords using AND / OR (known as Boolean operators). Write your search strategy below. Remember: OR groups all of your synonyms together for each theme of your topic and makes your search broader; AND goes between the different themes to combine them. |

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| **Step 5: Limiting**Write the ways in which you might limit your search if you retrieve too many results. How far back you wish to search? Do you only want articles with a UK focus? Can you select a specific age group within the database? Can you select specific study types? |

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| **Step 6: Choose your databases**Write a list of all the databases you want to use to obtain your results:  |

Once you have followed all these steps you are now ready to go and try out your search. For more advice or help, please contact Helen Whittaker, Academic Liaison Librarian for Psychology.

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