

## Constructing a Search Strategy

Use this Guide to help you plan your database search

### Step 1: Define your topic

Write your search question below:

Remember not to choose a topic that is too broad or one that is too narrow.

### Step 2: Choose your Keywords

Look at your search question – what are the keywords?  
Write your keywords below:

### Step 3: Identify alternative terminology

Write a list of your keywords below, and then think of alternative terms for them.

Think about synonyms, American terminology, acronyms and alternative spellings.

#### **Step 4: Combining your keywords**

Use BOOLEAN Operators to combine your keywords. Write your Boolean search strategy below.

Remember – OR makes your search broader, AND makes your search narrower

#### **Step 5: Limiting**

How will you limit your search if you get too many results. Write the ways you might limit below.

Think about:

How far back you wish to search (Publication year)?

Do you only want articles written in English?

Can you select a specific subject area within the database eg Sport Science, Cell Biology?

Do you only want primary research articles or review papers?

What else can you think of?

#### **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 Richard Persaud or Helen Whittaker, Science Librarians:  
[sciencelibrarians@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:sciencelibrarians@brookes.ac.uk), Tel: 01865 483137/9

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