

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 to choose a topic that is neither too broad nor too narrow.

Step 2: Choose your keywords

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

Step 3: Identify alternative terminology

Think of alternative terms for your keywords:

Think about synonyms, acronyms, American terminology and alternative spellings. Remember, **truncation** (*) will find alternative word endings; **wildcards** (?) will find alternative spellings.

Step 4: Combining your keywords

Use Boolean operators to combine your keywords. Write your Boolean search strategy below:

Remember: OR groups all of your synonyms together for each keyword and makes your search broader; AND goes between each different keyword or group of synonyms to make your search narrower

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? Do you only want articles about a specific type of trial e.g. RCT?

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 the library: library@brookes.ac.uk