

# **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](mailto:library@brookes.ac.uk)