Search Preparation Worksheet

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TIP: Review the General “Tips and Tricks” for Searching on the back side/second page of this handout FIRST.

1. Write your research topic or question:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

2. From your research topic or question, write the major concepts (either single words or short phrases) below.

Major concept #1: ______________________________________________________________________

Major concept #2: ______________________________________________________________________

Major concept #3 (if applicable): ______________________________________________________________________

Major concept #4 (if applicable): ______________________________________________________________________

3. For each of your major concepts, write several synonyms or other alternate terms that might be useful for searching. This is a beginning list – you may add to it later.
   a. HINT: Use Wikipedia or do a Google Search to come up with synonyms/alternate terms.
      i. Example: Try looking up philosophy of education.

Synonyms for major concept #1:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Synonyms for major concept #2:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Synonyms for major concept #3 (if applicable):

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Synonyms for major concept #4 (if applicable):

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
4. Using your major concepts and synonyms, write several search statements that you will use to search.

a. _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________
   Major concept #1      Major concept #2      Major concept #3      Major concept #4
   (if applies)         (if applies)         (if applies)         (if applies)

b. _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________
   Synonym for          Synonym for          Synonym for          Synonym for
   Major concept #1   Major concept #2   Major concept #3      Major concept #4
   (if applies)   (if applies)      (if applies)         (if applies)

c. Another search I may try (HINT: Mix and match your major concepts and synonyms):
   _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________
   (if applies)      (if applies)      (if applies)         (if applies)

d. Another search I may try (HINT: Mix and match your major concepts and synonyms):
   _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________ AND _______________
   (if applies)      (if applies)      (if applies)         (if applies)

General “Tips and Tricks” for Searching

- When searching, keeping it simple and taking time to think about your search terms will give you better results!

EXAMPLE:

Research Topic: Program evaluation for family planning clinics

Concept #1: program evaluation     Concept #2: family planning clinics

Search statement: program evaluation AND family planning clinics

Synonyms: effectiveness, evaluation, family planning services, reproductive health services

Other search statements: effectiveness AND family planning clinics
program evaluation AND reproductive health services

Key Points:

➤ Databases only search the identifying information of an article [title, author, journal, etc.] and the abstract [short description/summary], not the entire article.
   
   o Avoid entering your research topic or question word-for-word. You should also not enter a string of words, like 'family planning clinics evaluation.'
   
   o Leave off words that are implied or that do not add meaning,
       - Example: Leave off short words such as a, an, the, for

➤ Brainstorm synonyms/alternate search terms.
   
   o In the example above, for instance, note the synonyms for family planning clinics: family planning services, reproductive health services
   
   o A related term for program evaluation is effectiveness.

➤ You may need to think broader.
   
   o If you are not finding articles using program evaluation, try searching evaluation. It is possible that articles may discuss programs but not mention the word ‘programs’ in the title or abstract of the article.

➤ There may not be articles written specifically on health education / health promotion programs in Arkansas.
   
   o You can try adding Arkansas or (south AND state) [including the parentheses], but re-do your search if you do not find results.
       - EXAMPLES: program evaluation AND reproductive health services AND Arkansas evaluation AND family planning services AND (south AND state)