1. Write your research question.


2. From your research question above, write the major concepts (either single words or short phrases) in the spaces below. [Be sure to read the ‘General “Tips and Tricks” for Searching’ on the back side of this handout.]

   Major concept #1: __________________________________________________________

   Major concept #2: __________________________________________________________

   Major concept #3 (if applicable): _____________________________________________

3. For each of your major concepts, write several synonyms or other search terms that might be useful for searching. This is a beginning list – you may add to it later. HINT: Your textbook may be helpful for coming up with these terms.

   Synonyms for major concept #1:

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   Synonyms for major concept #2:

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   Synonyms for major concept #3 (if applicable):

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

4. Using your major concepts/search terms and synonyms, write several search statements that you will use to search the article database CINAHL Complete, MEDLINE Complete, and possibly PubMed Central.

   a. ___________________________ AND ___________________________ AND ___________________________
      Major Concept #1                  Major Concept #2                  Major Concept #3 (if applies)

   b. ___________________________ AND ___________________________ AND ___________________________
      Synonym for Major Concept #1      Synonym for Major Concept #2      Synonym for Major Concept #3
      (if applicable)
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:**

**TOPIC/RESEARCH QUESTION:** Should the ventrogluteal muscles or deltoid muscles be used for IM injections?

**Concept #1:** ventrogluteal muscles  **Concept #2** deltoid muscles  **Concept #3:** intramuscular injections

**Search statement:** ventrogluteal AND deltoid AND IM injections

**Synonyms:** buttocks, gluteal, intramuscular injections

**Other search statements:**
- buttocks AND deltoid muscles AND IM injections
- gluteal AND deltoid muscles AND intramuscular injections
- ventrogluteal AND intramuscular injections

**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.
  - Avoid entering your topic or research question word-for-word. You should also not enter part of your topic or research question as a string of words, like ‘buttocks or deltoid muscles for IM injections’
  - Leave off words that are implied or that do not add meaning,
    - ‘ventrogluteal’, rather than ‘ventrogluteal muscles,’ was used in the example above because it is implied and not every title or abstract may use the word ‘muscles’
    - Used for, should, and other short words that do not add meaning like a, an, the, does, should also be left out.
- Brainstorm synonyms and think broader and narrower. In the example above, note one of the synonyms listed is buttocks. Articles that discuss buttocks may address ventrogluteal muscles, even though ventrogluteal muscles is not mentioned in the title or abstract.
- “Buzzwords,” lingo, and acronyms are not used by everyone and may vary, so synonyms/alternate terms are important. In the example above, note the synonym for IM injections is intramuscular injections.
  - If your topic deals with drugs, also search using the generic name. **EXAMPLE:** Tylenol = acetaminophen.
- If you have three or more major concepts, you may need to broaden your search by leaving off a concept. In the example above, note the other search statement that does not include ‘deltoid.’ There may be articles that compare ventrogluteal and deltoid muscle sites, even though ‘deltoid’ is not mentioned in the title or abstract.