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

1. In the space below, write your PICO(T) question.

2. From your topic above, 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 search terms that might be useful for searching. This is a beginning list – you may add to it later.
   - HINT: Use your nursing textbooks to come up with synonyms/alternate terms.
   - ANOTHER HINT: Wikipedia can also be helpful for finding synonyms/alternate terms.

   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 for articles.
a. ______________ AND ______________ AND ______________ AND ______________
   Major concept #1  Major concept #2  Major concept #3  Major concept #4
   (if applies)  (if applies)

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

d. Another search I may try (HINT: Mix and match your major concepts and synonyms):
   __________________ AND __________________ AND __________________ AND (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:
PICO(T): Do obese children have higher cholesterol levels than children that are healthy weight?

Concept #1: obese  Concept #2: cholesterol  Concept #3: children

Search statement: obese AND cholesterol AND children

Synonyms: obesity, overweight, body mass index, pediatric

Other search statements: obesity AND cholesterol AND children  Body mass index AND cholesterol AND pediatric

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 topic or research question word-for-word. You should also not enter part of your topic or PICO(T) as a string of words, like ‘high cholesterol in obese children.’
  o Leave off words that are implied or that do not add meaning,
    • ‘cholesterol,’ rather than ‘cholesterol levels,’ was used in the example above because levels is implied and not every title or abstract may use the word ‘level’
    • Used for, should, and other short words that do not add meaning like a, an, the, do, does, than, should also be left out.

⇒ “Buzzwords,” lingo, and acronyms are not used by everyone and may vary, so synonyms/alternate terms are important. In particular, not all articles and authors use acronyms. Note that instead of BMI, ‘body mass index’ is used.
  o If your topic deals with drugs, also search using the generic name. EXAMPLE: Tylenol = acetaminophen.

⇒ If you find an article on topic when you are searching CINAHL Complete, MEDLINE Complete, and/or PubMed Central, pay attention to the subjects and terminology that is used. Re-do your search using these subjects/terminology.

⇒ DO NOT SPEND MORE THAN AN HOUR SEARCHING. AFTER AN HOUR, IT IS TIME TO STOP AND ASK FOR HELP FOR A LIBRARIAN. John Siegel, a reference librarian, is more than happy to have a research appointment with you. Evening and virtual (online) appointments are available with enough advance notice.