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

1. Write your research topic:
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

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.

   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: The use of Facebook in bullying teenagers

   Concept #1: Facebook  Concept #2: bullying  Concept #3: teenagers

Search statement: Facebook AND bullying AND teenagers

Synonyms: social media, cyberbullying, adolescents, high school

Other search statements: Facebook AND cyberbullying AND teenagers  Social media AND bullying AND adolescents

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 research topic or question word-for-word. You should also not enter a string of words, like ‘Facebook bullying in teenagers’
  - Leave off words that are implied or that do not add meaning.
   - Example: Leave off short words such as a, an, the, of, for.
- Brainstorm synonyms/alternate search terms.
  - In the example above, for instance, note the synonyms for Facebook: social media
  - In the example above, for instance, note the synonyms for teenagers: adolescents, high school (since adolescents go to high school)
- You may need to think broader or narrower when it comes to search terms.
  - You may want to experiment leaving off a concept. For instance, if you were to search cyberbullying AND adolescents AND Arkansas, you would likely not find many articles. Instead, you might leave off Arkansas.
  - If you are getting too many results, try focusing your search by adding a concept. For instance, cyberbullying AND adolescents AND prevention.