Developing a Research Topic and Search Strategies

**Part 1: Refining Your Topic**

Preliminary ideas for a topic:

Questions about your topic that you want to answer:

Fill in as many details as you can about your topic. These can be used to limit a search.

- Population:
- Dates/time frame:
- Age group:
- Geographic location(s):

**Part 2: Developing your Search Strategy**

Using your preliminary ideas for a topic, select the key terms that need to be in your search. Next, list synonyms and broader and narrower terms for each key concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1</th>
<th>Concept 2</th>
<th>Concept 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eating disorders</td>
<td>children</td>
<td>treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OR</strong> Anorexia Nervosa</td>
<td><strong>OR</strong> pediatric</td>
<td><strong>OR</strong> therapy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Try it out with your topic:**

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<tr>
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</table>
Part 3: Creating Your Search Statement

Using the terms from your table in Part 2, create a search statement by joining terms using Boolean operators (and, or) and truncation.

**And** - will find all search terms

**Or** – will find at least one search term (either Anorexia Nervosa or Bulimia)

Be sure to put words being joined with OR on the same line

If using one line, put parentheses around words being joined

**Truncation (*) Symbol** – To use truncation, enter the root of a search term and replace the ending with an asterisk *. This will find all word endings of that word.

Example: child* finds child, children, childhood

Using the terms from your Concept table, fill in the lines below:

If you don’t have synonyms or related terms, don’t fill in the second line after the or.

_________________________ or _______________________________

AND ___________________________ or _______________________________

AND ___________________________ or _______________________________

Part 4: Using Limiters

In many databases, there are limiters under the search box. Limiters vary depending on the database. Using a limiter replaces using a term in the search box.

Some useful limiters:

- **Peer Reviewed** - limits to journals that are peer reviewed. Individual articles may not be peer reviewed.
- **Publication Type** – Academic Journal, Book, Newspaper, Clinical Trial
- **Document Type** – Article, Book Review, Case Study, Journal Article
- **Sex/Gender** - Male or Female
- **Age Groups** - limit to preset age groups.
  - Selecting **Child** would be used in place of child* in the search boxes