

ONLINE SEARCHING -- GETTING STARTED

Before sitting down at a computer to search, first get organized. It helps to brainstorm, and perhaps also talk over your topic with another student in your class, a colleague, professor or reference librarian. When you can phrase your ideas as a topic question, then break that question into individual components, and finally put the pieces back together as a search statement. How? Here's an example. If a worksheet approach is helpful, print these pages for your use.

1. Try phrasing your search topic as a question or statement.

In this example, the ideal article would be called: "Indigenous methods for healing trauma".

2. Identify each separate concept. (Hint: look for **nouns**.) Write each concept separately.

<u>Concept 1:</u> indigenous [people]	<u>Concept 2:</u> healing	<u>Concept 3:</u> trauma
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3. For each concept, think of other words or phrases that describe this concept.

<u>Concept 1:</u> indigenous aboriginal aborigines native people native peoples first people first peoples natives	<u>Concept 2:</u> healing heal cure curing cures	<u>Concept 3:</u> trauma wounds injury injuries shock traumatic
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4. For similar terms, use truncation / wild cards

Check the onscreen help to find out what wild card symbol that individual search engine uses. If it is the asterisk (*), then typing: trauma* gets trauma and also traumas, traumatic, etc. But cur* could get too many useless words (like cursory) so it's better to type each word variation (cure, cures, curing).

5. Put the concept pieces back together using the best terms. Use **OR** to link terms within a column; use **AND** to link columns together. It may help to turn the columns sideways, like this:

Concept 1: indigen* **OR** aborig* **OR** native* **OR** first people*
AND

Concept 2: heal* **OR** cure **OR** cures **OR** curing
AND

Concept 3: trauma* **OR** injur* **OR** wound* **OR** shock

6. Do the search and evaluate the results.

Look at your search results – are there other ways to phrase any concept that didn't occur to you the first time? Refine your search strategy to include them. In this example we found that "traditional medicine" was also good for Concept 2, so we changed that to: heal* **OR** cure **OR** cures **OR** curing **OR** traditional medicine

Now it's your turn.

- 1. Try phrasing your search topic as a question or statement.** Include all the relevant elements. If this is tough, imagine the title of an article that would provide exactly the information you want. My ideal article would be called:

“ _____ ”

- 2. Identify each separate concept.** (Hint: look for **nouns**.) Write each concept separately.

Concept 1:

Concept 2:

Concept 3:

- 3. For each concept, think of other words or phrases** that describe this concept. They don't have to be synonyms; just be useful for your question. (Hint: take advantage of **thesaurus terms** if available.) Write related words in the same column.

Concept 1:

Concept 2:

Concept 3:

- 4. Are any of these terms similar** – can you use **truncation (wild card)** to save re-typing variations of the same word? For example, therapist, therapists, therapeutically can all begin with therapist ... Mark these terms (e.g. therapist, therapists, therapeutic, therapeutically).

- 5. Put the concept pieces back together** again – between related words in the same box, write **OR** (any of these terms are equally useful); between each box, write **AND** (each concept **must be** there). This becomes your search strategy.

Concept 1:

a

OR

b

OR

c

Concept 2:

d

OR

e

OR

f

Concept 3:

g

OR

h

- 6. Do the search and evaluate the results.**

Try again! Experiment! This is a trial-and-error process. If you get frustrated or want help, please contact CIIS reference librarians by sending email to: AskRef@ciis.edu .