



# Search Strategy Worksheet

**1. Write a sentence** to describe your topic and underline all the important words eg. *Discuss the effects of poverty on children in New Zealand:*

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**2. Write down all the important words for the main concepts**, then list similar or related words (use a dictionary, thesaurus or encyclopaedia to find other words/terms):  
**Combine all these terms using AND and OR** to form your search statement.

Concept 1 \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_  
**AND**  
 Concept 2 \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_  
**AND**  
 Concept 3 \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Construct a search statement** using:

- *Keywords* and synonyms (all the useful words you can think of)
- *Truncation* symbol (usually ?, \*, or \$) for plurals and words beginning with these letters
- *Brackets* to group concepts eg. (*poverty or poor*)
- *Boolean* AND, OR (to join those words)

For example: (*poverty or poor*) and (*child\* or adolescen\**) and *zealand\**

**4. List your search statements** and the number of results (hits) you got from each search and database:

Database	Search statement	Hits
eg. <i>Index New Zealand</i>	eg. <i>poverty or poor and child? or adolescen?</i> and limit to articles written in the last 2 years	23

**Note:** If you get too many results add further search terms or other limits eg. date

**HELP!** Check the “Help” screen for search tips, indexes, thesaurus, symbols used for searching etc. **Ask a librarian.**

## Search strategy hints

**1. Define key concepts:** use dictionaries, subject encyclopedias, textbooks, thesauri.  
Some databases have an online thesaurus or list of subject terms.

**2. Use alternative words**

- synonyms eg. New Zealand, Aotearoa
- acronyms eg. UN, United Nations

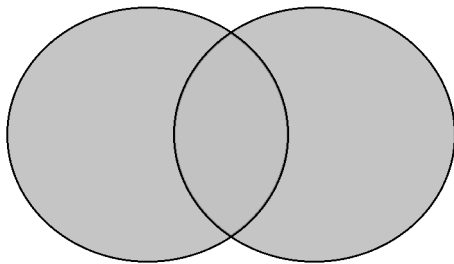
**3. Search for variants of words**

- truncation (usually \*) e.g. child\* locates child, children, childish...
- wildcard (usually ?) e.g. wom?n locates woman, women

**4. Understand search logic:**

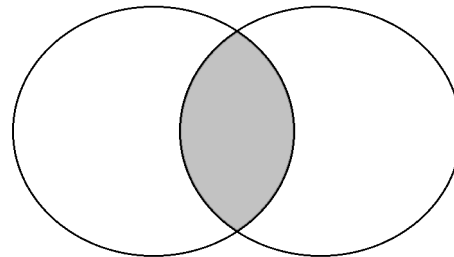
Use Boolean OR, AND to broaden or narrow a search

poverty **OR** children



Retrieves all articles in the shaded area i.e. about EITHER poverty OR children

poverty **AND** children



Retrieves all articles in the shaded area i.e. about BOTH poverty AND children

**5. What next:**

*Disappointing results?*

- Modify your search
- Check the database search tips for help
- Try another relevant database
- Ask a librarian

*Like what you've found?*

- Check the Library catalogue to see if the item is in the Library
- If the item is not available, find out about Document Delivery from Library staff

### Remember...

Library staff are here to support you with your learning. If at any stage, you are confused about where to start or how to continue a search, please...

*Ask a librarian*