Applying a Search Strategy

This handout is especially useful when using databases that allow you to build a search history such as Discovery, Business Source Complete, and Engineering Village

Write a short description of your topic. Frame this as a sharp concise question. These will become your initial search words.

Question:

Step 1 Identify separate concepts that make up your search:

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4

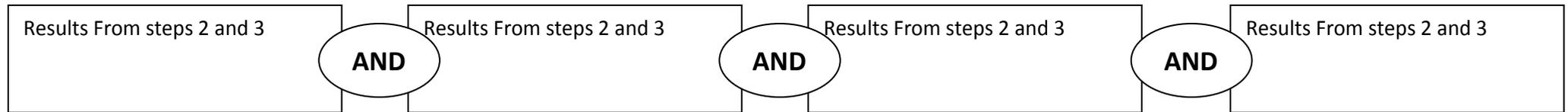| Step 2 Keywords	Keywords	Keywords	Keywords
OR	OR	OR	OR

Step 3:

Thesaurus terms/subject headings	Thesaurus terms/Subject headings	Thesaurus terms/Subject headings	Thesaurus terms/Subject headings

Step 4 Now use the Search History (Discovery, Business Source Complete, Engineering Village, Web of Science) to combine searches

Results From steps 2 and 3	**AND**	Results From steps 2 and 3	**AND**	Results From steps 2 and 3	**AND**	Results From steps 2 and 3

Remember results for different parts of your project may not need all concepts to be present. For an introduction an article setting the scene for just two concepts may be enough

Consider useful filters:

Date, Language, Place,

Type of information wanted: Book, Journal article, Conference paper, Standard etc

Journal: Academic, Peer reviewed, Professional, Trade

Article: Meta Analysis, Research (Randomised control trial, Laboratory report, Experiment, Quantitative, Qualitative), Literature review, Case study, News item

Is item available: print resources, e-resources, interlibrary loan (please consider pagination!), IR repositories –check both Google web and Google Scholar search

Discovery and Ebsco Database search language:

i. **Truncation** (usually * maybe $) – searches for a stem of a word: manage* will find manage, management, manager/s, managed, managerial, manages,

ii. **Wildcard** (Ebsco ?) will find alternative letter spellings: Organi?ation –will find organisation or organization, # allows extra letter eg labo#r for labor and labour

iii. **Phrase searching** "Quotation marks" will work in most searches including Google and Google Scholar

iv. **Proximity searching** Usually special to each database –growing in use

Ebsco uses n+number (1-5) for words in either order:

Britain N3 economy – words either way round but within 3 words

and

Wnumber (1-5) for words in this order within given number of words

Small w1 medium – Medium following up to one word after small