Steps to Generate your Initial Terms & Strategy

Your First Steps:

1. **Step 1:** Start with your TOPIC
2. **Step 2:** Identify the 2-3 CORE IDEAS/CONCEPTS within your topic:
   - the key elements, the major concepts—ideas that could be topics themselves
   - You can do this in a couple of ways—it’s flexible.
3. **Step 3:** Generate your initial SEARCH TERMS related to those concepts—
   - terms you might use in searching for information on those concepts

Example:

1. **Start with the TOPIC:** Is there a relationship between texting and auto accidents?
2. **Identify the CORE CONCEPTS:**
   - One option—2 core concepts: texting + auto accidents
   - Another option—3 core concepts: texting + automobiles + accidents
3. **Generate initial search terms**
   - Identify SYNONYMS and RELATED TERMS for the concepts (keywords) you have identified. You might also use SPELLING VARIATIONS, PLURALS, BROADER or NARROWER terms.
   - **For the 1st Set of Core Concepts**
     - Concept 1: texting
     - Concept 2: auto accidents, automobile accidents, traffic accidents, car crashes
   - **For the Alternate Set of Core Concepts—you might have different search terms!**
     - Concept 1: texting
     - Concept 2: automobiles, cars, trucks, SUVs
     - Concept 3: accidents, crashes

You are now ready to start searching! How? Use these terms in your search.

- Choose 1 term from each concept to find information relevant to your whole topic, pulling up results that include words from each of the key concepts in your topic.
- Use the word AND to connect each of these terms.
- If you have a 2-word or 3-word phrase, use quotation marks around that phrase to get an exact match when you search

**Step 4:** Sample Searches:

- Type in the search box: Texting and “automobile accidents”
- Type in the search box: Texting and automobiles and accidents
You Can Also Do a Power Search, Using All of your Search Terms at Once

Here’s How:

- Combine your terms using the appropriate connectors, AND and OR.
- Use OR to connect the terms you could use for each of your concepts. This will find any mention of any of your synonyms for a given concept.
- Use AND to connect and find all of your concepts.

Example:

Texting AND Automobiles OR cars OR trucks OR SUVs AND accidents OR crashes

This works best using the advanced search options that provide you with 3 or more search boxes.

Next Steps: Planning your Parameters

Step 5: Identify any parameters you need to limit your search to.

Some options:
- English language only
- Scholarly articles only
- Certain range of years only

Step 6: Choose the right Library Catalog(s) or Database(s)

- Need books? Go to our Library Catalogs. Start with the ODU Library Catalog.
- Need articles? Go to Find It > Databases. Start with the database Academic Search Complete or choose other databases based on the broad subject of your topic.

Next Steps: Doing the Searching

Step 7: Enter your Search!

Step 8: Revise your search as needed, based on what you find in your results.
Your Search Strategy Worksheet

Step 1: Start with your TOPIC:

Step 2: Go back to your topic and underline the 2-3 core concepts in your topic.

Step 3: Generate your initial search terms:

Possible search terms for Concept 1:

Possible search terms for Concept 2:

Possible search terms for Concept 3 (if you have a 3rd one):

Step 4: Generate your initial searches:

Step 5: Identify any parameters you need to limit your search to.
- Language?
- Years?
- Type of Source?
- Something else?

Step 6: Which search tool(s) do you need?
- Library catalogs?
- Library databases? If so, which ones?

Step 7: Go to the search tool & enter your search!

Step 8: Revise your search as needed, based on what you find in your results.

Need Help?
Ask a Librarian: 614.251.4754 | 888. 681.8044 | refdesk@ohiodominican.edu
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