

Search Strategies for online searching

Prepared by:

Ms. Juvy Vergara

Student Research Supervisor

Steps for on line searching

1. Identify the problem

- Can I state my search problem in a clear question?
 - What type of information do I need? (overview, scholarly, news, point of view, documents)
 - How much information do I need? (term paper, essay, speech, definition)
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For Example

- ❑ [Law and economics - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
- ❑ A Wikipedia article about the movement that tries to apply the methods of economics to legal problems. ... International · **Economic** systems. Monetary and Financial ...
- ❑ [**en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_and_economics**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_and_economics) - 95k - [Cached](#)
- ❑ [Economic Principles](#)
- ❑ What are the **economic** drivers of cultural evolution? ... is the most basic of **economic principles** but it isn't a stable equilibrium! ...
- ❑ [**www.themeister.co.uk/economics/principles.htm**](http://www.themeister.co.uk/economics/principles.htm) - 59k - [Cached](#)

- [\[PDF\] **Economic Principles**](#)
- 73k - Adobe PDF - [View as html](#)
- some basic **economic principles** that most buyers and sellers intuitively ... **Economic ... Economic Principles**. 49. fees and interest for use of these ...
- www.ctrealtor.com/consumerpdfs/Ch04.pdf
- [Economic Policy in a Weakening Economy: Principles For Fiscal Stimulus ...](#)
- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan research organization and policy institute that conducts research and analysis on a range of government ...
- www.cbpp.org/1-8-08bud.htm - 98k - [Cached](#)

Steps for on line searching

2. Select appropriate databases/search tools

- Does it cover my subject?
- Does it contain the formats I need to answer my questions? (newspapers, magazines, primary sources, encyclopedia)
- Are there abstracts that help me decide if the text will be useful?

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- Does it cover the time period I am interested in?
- Can I understand the information contained in it? (If I can't understand the abstracts, the full text may be even tougher!)
- Is it full text? If not, can I access the materials it indexes through interlibrary loans, other libraries, or fax?

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□ 3. **Brainstorm keywords**

- What are my major concepts?
- What synonyms, broader or narrower terms, or related ideas could I use?
- How will I express keywords with Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT)?
- Should I be concerned about plurals or other forms of words? (Are there truncation or wildcard features?)

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- Are there any proper names (people or places) that would focus my search?
- Should I adjust my strategy for a full-text database?
- Is there a thesaurus or controlled vocabulary?
- Are some words meaningless in this database? (for example, "company" in a business database)
- Have I spelled everything correctly?

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4. Subject vs. keyword search (Subject directory vs. Search engine)

- Do I have more than one concept to search?
- Am I browsing for a topic or looking for a way to narrow a broad topic?
- Can I spell all the vocabulary correctly?
- Can I search by field?

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5. Refine the search online (Searching is an interactive process!)

- Are my hits relevant, readable, accessible?
- Have I used all the strategies I planned to use?
- Have I tried different combinations of keywords?
- Should I use broader or narrower terms?

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- Have I *mined* the most promising hits for better vocabulary (especially in the “subject” or “descriptor” fields)?
- Did I spell my search terms correctly?
- Do I need to ask the teacher-librarian information specialist for advice?
- Should I try another database?
- Is my topic really not “doable”? Should I consider another?

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6. Evaluate the search offline; examine that printout; ask, “What if?”

- How relevant were my hits?
- Which of the hits are the best? (most relevant, timely, credible, readable, available, and promote the point of view I support)

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- Which of my strategies worked best? Should I try them in another database?
- Are there additional keyword clues in my printouts?
- Did I select the best possible databases?
- What is my next step?

ONLINE SEARCH STRATEGIES...

- ❑ scan down the results list before using any of the links. The top ranked items may not be the most relevant to what you wanted. Often you'll find something more pertinent further down the list.
- ❑ Always try a simple query with specific key words first, since this usually works. To improve the selectivity of your queries, when you're getting too many irrelevant or uninteresting hits, link three or four keywords, or use several phrases.

ONLINE SEARCH STRATEGIES...

- ❑ Sometimes an EXACT PHRASE works better than several different words. Put quotation marks around the phrase and most search tools will search for sites in which the entire phrase is intact.
- ❑ Explore each search engine's site to get detailed instructions on how you can use them most efficiently. Each site includes specific information on how to narrow and better define your criteria. Look for HELP files or SEARCH TIPS, etc.

Three General Search Conventions

- ❑ Put quotation marks around phrases to request an exact match.
- ❑ Use a + to include an item or a - to exclude it.
- ❑ Use asterisks to search with wildcards (truncation)

e.g.

“Travel and tourism”

Travel + leisure + business

*Percentages of Tourists

basic BOOLEAN search operators:

- ❑ **AND, OR, NOT.** The words **AND** and **NOT** are the English equivalents of the + and - listed above.
- ❑ The **AND** operator narrows a search by finding only items which include **BOTH** terms, ie., Cat AND Dog
- ❑ The **OR** operator expands a search by finding all items which include either term, ie., Cat OR Dog or any combination.
- ❑ The **NOT** operator causes the retrieval of items that contain Cat but **NOT** Dog.

Reference

- ❑ PC World, Dec. 96 article "Searching is My Business: A Gumshoe's Guide to the Web - Hot Tips" by Dylan Tweney.

Thank you!!!