

Information Skills Refresher 1: Dissertation research - getting started (References, planning, and information sources)

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Research: writing

- Gather, assess and evaluate, form opinions, share
 - Presenting own ideas
 - Presenting what you've learned from others
- Citations: precise, accurate and detailed information
 - Allowing the reader to check and verify evidence on which your argument/discussion is based
 - Demonstrating the breadth of your gathering/reading and the work that you have considered in your research

Steps to Finding Reliable Information

- Step 1: Get ready to manage the information you find
- Step 2: Plan your search
- Step 3: What sort of information – sources?
- Step 4: Look for books - use Primo and ebook collections
- Step 5: Look for research level material, e.g. journal articles. Use the Find Databases option in Primo to identify relevant databases, then link and search
- Step 6: Look for support materials - Use Google or other search engines
- Step 7: Keep track of your references, avoid plagiarism

In all processes: be aware of copyright and the need to avoid plagiarism

A photograph of a modern library interior. The scene is dominated by a curved, white balcony that overlooks a study area. The balcony has a glass railing. Below the balcony, there are several rows of bookshelves filled with books. In the foreground, there are several black chairs and a small table, suggesting a study or reading area. The ceiling is made of horizontal wooden slats, and the overall lighting is bright and even. The text "Step 1: Think ahead – how to manage, store and keep track of all the references that you find?" is overlaid on a red rectangular background in the center of the image.

Step 1: Think ahead – how to manage, store and keep track of all the references that you find?

STEP 1: Keep a record of what you find

- It's important to be organised! You'll be reading a lot of sources
- Choices:
 - Record material (your sources) manually
 - Use a spreadsheet or document to record bibliographic details
 - Use index cards (or electronic equivalent)
 - Use reference management software
 - Many free and costed products
- Our recommendation: software can be helpful if you expect to cite more than 30 references. But if you have created a reliable manual system that is fine, especially during stressful times. It just needs to work for you

Referencing software

- Referencing option within Microsoft Word
- Zotero, Mendeley, Cite This for Me, CiteULike, Citavi – free or low-cost web-based apps
- EndNote, ProCite, Reference Manager, Papers – purchased, machine specific
- RefWorks – free (because we have paid for it), support materials available
- **Get organised:**
 - Find out what style you are expected to use
 - Invest time in learning how to use your preferred product correctly
 - OR become familiar with your preferred style and manually create your references





Step 2: Plan your search

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- Think about
 - **Time** (mornings are better than afternoons if searching databases)
 - **Topic**
 - Break it down into individual ideas/concepts
 - **Words**
 - Spelling e.g. labour / labor
 - Alternative words/synonyms, e.g. safety / risk
 - Truncation e.g. environment*
 - **Linking words** - Boolean operators (AND/OR)
- Write things down – keep a record!



Example topic:

Impact of oil spills on the marine environment



Impact of oil spills on the marine environment

oil spills marine environment oceans seas marine shoreline
environment environmental impact turtles dolphins whales

Concepts	Alternative keywords				
Idea 1	"oil spill*"	OR			
AND					
Idea 2	sea*	OR	ocean*	OR	marine
AND					
Idea 3	environment*	OR			

Library Information Skills Workshop: Designing your Search Strategy – Search grid/matrix

Try **brainstorming to analyse your topic**. In the blank box below write any words, phrases and authors that come to mind regarding your assignment. The words don't have to be in any order. Think about acronyms, singular and plural forms, word endings and spelling differences, e.g. US and UK English.

Now group your terms together. Look at the most important idea in your assignment = concept/idea 1. Do you have more than one word/phrase for that idea e.g. oil OR gas OR petroleum? Place the words in the 1st row of the grid/matrix below. What is your second most important concept/idea? Do you have more than one word/phrase for that idea? Write them in the 2nd row. If you have an additional concept/idea, write words/phrases for this in the 3rd row. Now apply the search rules (e.g. truncation symbol; "quotation marks" for phrases - where applicable) for the database you wish to search.

Concepts	Alternative keywords/phrases				
Concept/Idea 1		OR		OR	
AND					
Concept/Idea 2		OR		OR	
AND					
Concept/Idea 3		OR		OR	

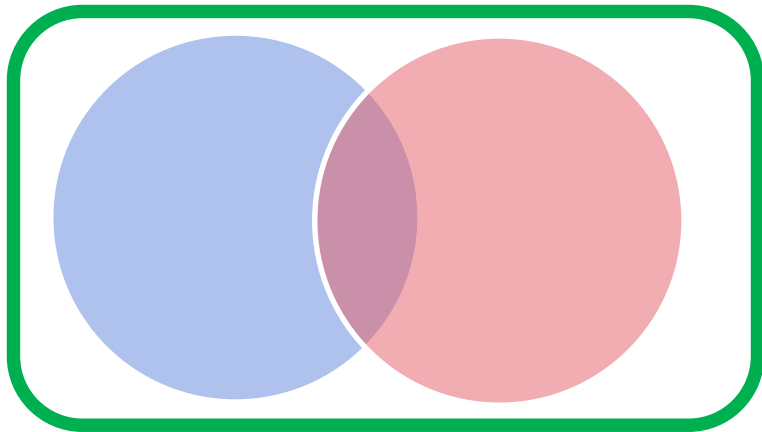
You are now ready to construct your "search string" in your selected database using the Boolean operators **OR** and **AND**. Many databases use a search interface which where you only need to type the **OR** operator within the search line/row as the **AND** operator between lines is already assumed (it is the default setting – do not change it!)

You do not need to fill every box or line however for some assignments you may need a grid that is greater than 3 x 3. The same process applies no matter the grid/matrix size: words/phrases on same line/row = same idea/concept and remember to apply the search rules (e.g. truncation symbol; "quotation marks" for phrases - where applicable) for the database you wish to search.

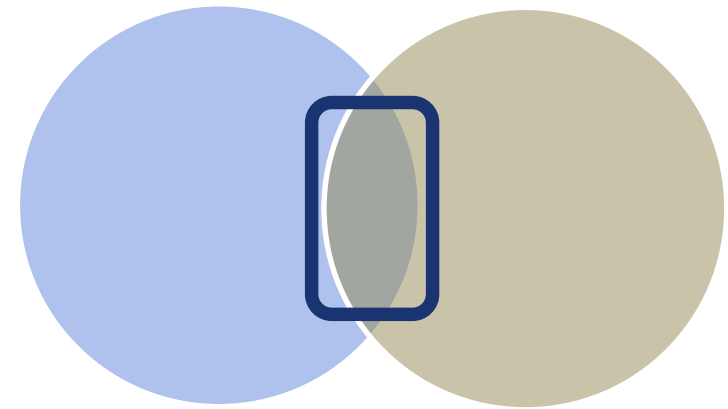
Searching using Boolean logic

Operators to link search words, phrases and concepts for powerful and effective searching in databases (and in other resources)

AND, **OR** are main operators



ocean **OR** marine



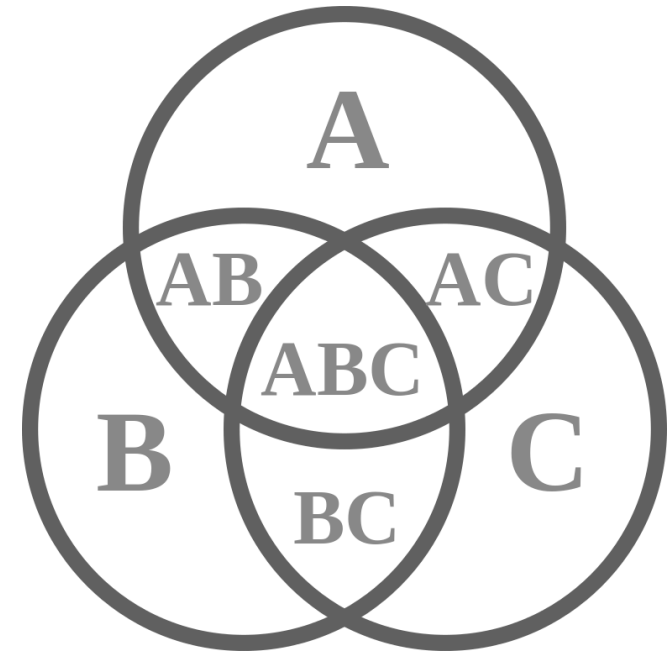
ocean **AND** environment

Boolean linking terms

OR Broadens the search
Any/all of these words

AND Narrows the search
More specific
Combine ideas/concepts

NOT Cuts out unwanted terms
Use with care!!





Step 3: What type of information/source?

Type of information	Document type	Tool
Background, overview, summarised	Books – print or electronic	Primo (Books+ tab)
Research level, detailed, specific	Theses (PhD)	Primo (Books+ tab) Databases, e.g. Index to Theses
Research level, detailed, specific, overview	Journal articles, research papers, conference papers	Databases
Technical, operational, commercial, industry-specific, governmental	Reports, manuals, webpages	Google and other search engines. Document specific databases, e.g. BSOL for British Standards

Different tools for different types of information. **Primo** is a portal to many of these

Action – get started

- Think about your referencing
 - Do you have a system in place to keep track of your reading?
 - Do you know what referencing style to use?
 - If you are using software or an app – are you familiar with what it can do?
- Create your initial search strategy
 - Keywords and phrases
- Think about the type of information that you need and what sort of documents will contain this information. (It will impact on the tools and sources that you access)



[https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library
/support/information-skills-
179.php](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/support/information-skills-179.php)

