Library Information Skills Workshop | Designing your Search Strategy

- Analyse your research topic and identify its key concepts (keywords)
- Note acronyms, singular and plural forms, word endings and spelling differences, e.g. US and UK English forms
- Think about alternative ways of describing each concept
- Note leading researchers and research institutions
- Note any limiting factors in your search, e.g. date range, document type
- Apply the search rules (e.g. truncation symbol, "quotation marks" for phrases where applicable) for the database you wish to search
- Construct your search string using the Boolean operators **OR** and **AND**

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:

Now group your terms together. Look at the most important concept (keyword) in your assignment. Do you have more than one word for that concept? (e.g. fruit or banana or orange). Place the words in the first row of the grid below. Take the words you have thought of for the second concept and write them in the second row. If you have an additional concept, write this in the third row:

Concept 1		OR		OR	
AND					
Concept 2		OR		OR	
AND					
Concept 3		OR		OR	

Example Topic: **"Discuss the role of mobile phones in the development of cancer"**

In the blank box below, we have written the words and phrases that apply to the above topic. The words are not in any order.

mobile phone, cell phone, cancer, mast, mobile phones, cellular phones, tumour, tumor, smart phones, lesions, malignant, benign

Then we grouped our terms together:

Concepts		Alternative keywords/phrases				
Concept 1	"mobile phone*"	**OR**	"cellular phone*"	**OR**	"cell phone*"
AND					
Concept 2	cancer*	**OR**	tumour	**OR**	tumor
AND					
Concept 3	"electromagnetic emission*"	**OR**	"electromagnetic field*"	**OR**	
AND					
Concept 4	*If you find too many references, are there any extra ideas you can use to restrict results? e.g. those related to* **phone mast* OR mobile mast* OR base station*** *or to a date range?*				

The search rules applied in the above grid are:
truncation symbol *
phrase searching using "quotation marks"
These search rules are used in Primo, but also common to many databases