Develop a Search Strategy

Save Yourself Time!

Understand the Search Process

Information research is a process of **trial and error**.

- ○ **Brainstorm** search words with a research question in mind **-->**
- ○ **Explore** initial search results (**Google** is ok here!) **-->**
- ○ **Refine** your search, **adding or removing search words** based on your initial search **-->**
- ○ **Conduct** a more targeted search (now in a **library database**) **-->**
- ○ **Repeat one or more steps! -->**

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Construct Your Search Strategy (Example)

Research question: Can LSD be used to help people with posttraumatic stress disorder?

Step 1: Break up this research question into **two or three main concepts**. Ignore extraneous words.

- **Concept #1:** lsd
- **Concept #2:** posttraumatic stress disorder

Step 2: Conduct an **initial search** with these words, and quickly **scan the results**.

Step 3: Using information from your initial search, add **synonyms, acronyms, and variant spellings**.

- **Concept #1:** lsd, psychedelic, mdma
- **Concept #2:** posttraumatic stress disorder, ptsd

Understand the Nuts and Bolts

- Even if the search engine/database you are using doesn't require you to enter **boolean operators** (essentially the words **AND/OR**), it is still using them behind the scenes. It will help you to **know the logic behind your search.**
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- **AND** gives you results that include **ALL** of your concepts.

- **OR** gives you results that include **ANY** of your concepts.

- Essentially, **you are searching**:

  (lsd **OR** psychedelic **OR** mdma) **AND** (posttraumatic stress disorder **OR** ptsd)

What Would This Look Like in a Library Database?

Example: