Database Search Strategy Worksheet

1. Define your research topic. This is typically a question or a hypothesis.

Enter your research statement here:

2. Identify your KEY CONCEPTS.

After you have defined your research statement, identify key concepts related to your topic. Typically, you will have between two and four key concepts or main ideas.

Example: **How does the use of social media affect self-esteem in teenagers?**

Key concepts are:

- Social media
- Self-esteem
- Teenagers

*Note: It can be helpful to read background material on your topic as an aid to finding keywords.*

Enter one concept word (keyword) relating to your research statement on each of the lines below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept 1:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept 2:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 3:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 4 (optional):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Identify synonyms and RELATED TERMS for the concepts (keywords) you have selected. You may use a dictionary or thesaurus to find synonyms or related terms.

Example:

- Related terms for social media might be: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, social networks
- Related terms for self-esteem might be: self-worth, self-concept
- Related terms for teenagers might be: adolescents, teens, youth

Now you can create a search statement so you can retrieve relevant documents from a database.
Using an EBSCO database, your search statement may look like this example:

Create your statement in the box below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>AND</td>
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<tr>
<td>AND</td>
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4. **Choose an appropriate database.**
   After you have defined your topic, you need to select one or more databases related to your topic. Check the Complete List of Databases link on the library webpage for a list with descriptions. Or ask your professor or a librarian for suggestions. Academic Search Complete is typically a best bet, a great place to start.

5. **Look at your results and continue to revise your search statement based on your results.**
   You may need to make it narrower or broader. You may look at the results and see related topics you are interested in, or other related terms to use. In this example, I may change my statement to (social media OR facebook) AND (body image) AND (adolescents) if I discover that I want to focus more on body image.

**Boolean Operators**

Boolean Operators are simple words (AND, OR) used as conjunctions or connector words to combine or exclude keywords in a search, resulting in more focused and productive results.

**AND**
Requires all keywords to be in each result (article) returned. If one term is contained in the document and the other is not, the document is not included in the results. **Narrows the search.**

**OR**
Either term (or both) will be in the returned document. **Broadens the search.**