Information Literacy 2
Search Strategy: The Basics

Basic Steps
1. Identify your question or what you want to know.

2. Ask yourself the following questions:
   - What sources are available?
   - Will my textbook be enough?
   - Should I look in an encyclopedia?
   - Are there any library reference books on my topic?
   - Will the article databases have information on my topic?
   - Will the Internet have the information I need?
   - Which sources have the depth of information that I need?

3. Choose the best sources for your topic or question.
   - After answering the questions in step 2, choose the sources with the best information for your project.
   - Use as many sources as you need.

4. Find the location of each source.
   - Library books, articles, or videos.
   - Subscription databases on the Library's homepage.
   - Internet.

5. Plan your search strategy.
   - Think about your topic and how you are going to search the resources.
   - Write down keywords, synonyms, and alternative spellings.
   - Be as specific as possible. If you don't find enough information, broaden your search.

6. Familiarize yourself with the sources and learn how to use each source.
   Discover how to find the information within the sources.
   - Print sources
     - Look for an index.
     - Read the preface or introduction, or explanatory notes.
     - Examine the table of contents.
   - Electronic databases
     - Read the help screens and FAQ's for each database.
       - Is phrase searching understood?
       - Does the database allow truncation?
       - Do proper names and nouns have to be capitalized?
     - Combine keywords. Look for Boolean operators.
     - Use links to related information.

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Searching Know-how

1. Boolean or combination search
   - Use operators AND, OR, NOT
   - **AND** narrows your search by combining topics
   - **OR** broadens your search by including any information on topics
   - **NOT** narrows your search by excluding information

   The example of a Boolean search for information about *Cats AND Dogs AND Birds* is illustrated by the circles above. The information retrieved is that information where all three circles intersect. You can see it is a specific section of the information.

2. Phrase search
   - Words linked together for a unique meaning
   - Some databases or search engines require quotation marks for phrase searching
     - “united states"
     - “bilingual education"

3. Truncation and Wild Cards
   - Uses a symbol to represent different endings or plural forms to the root word
   - Different databases may use different symbols.
   - Some databases automatically truncate.
     - librar? searches for library, libraries, librarian, librarianship, etc.
     - educat* searches for educate, educated, educator, education, etc.
     - wom*n searches for woman or women

4. Plus + and Minus – Commands
   - Using + in front of keywords allows you to mark certain words as essential to the search
   - Using – in front of keywords allows you to exclude certain words from the search
     - +carrot juice allows you to limit your search to carrot juice
     - “bilingual education” –ESL excludes ESL from your search results

Helpful Web Sites
Search Strategies
- UC Berkeley Library Recommended Search Strategy
  [www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Strategies.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Strategies.html)
- Noodle Quest: Develop the Ultimate Search Strategy

Search Engines
- UC Berkeley Library, The BEST Search Engines
  [www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html)
- UC Berkeley Library, Subject Directories: The Best and More
  [www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SubjDirectories.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SubjDirectories.html)