

# Starting Your Research

## 1 Choose your research topic

This should be one sentence, phrase, or question that describes what you are researching.

*For example:*

- *Use of mobile technology in the classroom*
- *Flipped classroom model in HS English classes*
- *Minority students and discipline*
- *Is teacher retention related to leadership styles?*

## 2 Identify key concepts

Key concepts are the main ideas that make up your topic. Try to think of 2-4 concepts that describe your topic, and write them in the boxes below. Each concept should only be 1 or 2 words.

*For example:*

- *If your topic is "use of mobile technology in the classroom," your concepts might be:*

**mobile technology**

**teaching**

**schools**

## 3 Generate keywords

Try to come up with at least three related keywords for each of your key concepts. Keywords can be synonyms, broader terms, more specific terms, or just related terms.

*For example:*

- *If your concept is "mobile technology," you might have keywords like:*

*Cellphones    Smart phones    iPads*

## 4 Start searching!

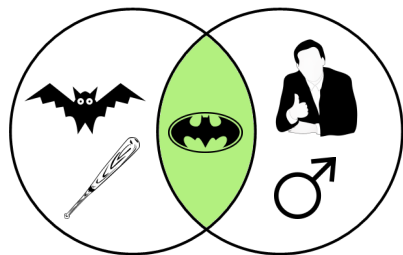
Use the tips on the back of this sheet to combine your keywords into effective search statements. Start your search in a library database related to your topic.

*Top Education databases:*

- *ERIC    PsycInfo    Ebsco Academic Search Complete    Professional Development Collection*

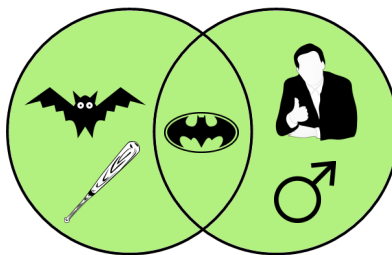
## Boolean Operators

Boolean operators are short, simple words that connect your search terms. These operators (AND, OR, NOT) are used to construct search statements which tell the database what results you want to see. See the diagrams below to learn about how each Boolean operator works.



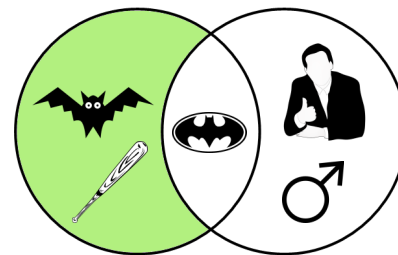
**bat AND man**

- AND limits to results with both of the connected keywords
- Use AND to *narrow* your search and return fewer results



**bat OR man**

- OR limits to results which contain either of the connected terms
- Use OR to *broaden* your search and return more results



**bat NOT man**

- NOT limits to results which contain the first term but exclude the second, connected term
- Use NOT to *narrow* your search and return fewer results

### Phrase Searching



- Use quotation marks to group two or more words together
- Phrase searching ensures that the words inside the quotes will be found in your results exactly as you wrote them
- Examples:  
“social media”  
“high school”

### Limiters



- Limiters can be used to *narrow* your search results
- *Full Text* will limit your results to items you can read in full, online
- *Peer-Reviewed* or *Scholarly* will limit your results to academic journal articles
- *Date* limiters can help you narrow your results by publication date

### Truncation and Wildcards

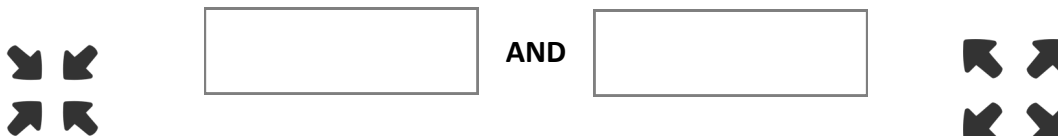


- Truncation substitutes a symbol, usually an asterisk (\*), for any ending of a root word
- Example:  
*econom\** = economic, economy, economize, economist, etc.
- Wildcards are symbols, usually a question mark (?), substituted for one character in a word
- Example:  
*ma?e* = mace, made, male, etc.

## Constructing Search Statements

Start simple. Select your two most important keywords, and write them in the boxes below.

Using the Boolean operator AND to join your keywords, try a search in the database and check out your results.



### Too many results?

- Try the following tips to *narrow* your search:
- Use Boolean operator AND to add more keywords
- Use phrase searching to keep words together
- Use limiters to narrow by full text, scholarly, or date
- Use more specific keywords

### Too few results?

- Try the following tips to *broaden* your search:
- Use Boolean operator OR to join related keywords
- Use truncation and wildcards to find variant endings and spellings
- Use broader keywords