Creating an Effective Search Query
The research cycle

1. Decide which sources to use (e.g. databases, search engines etc.)
2. Develop your search strategy (search terms, combinations etc.)
3. Review your search results
4. Amend your search strategy and / or choose different sources
5. Use the bibliography of relevant items to identify other useful papers and search terms
Creating an effective search query (1)

An example:

Human rights of child asylum seekers
Creating an effective search query (2)

An example:
- Human rights
- Child
- Asylum seekers
Creating an effective search query (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main concept</th>
<th>Concept 1</th>
<th>Asylum seekers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 2</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 3</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asylum seekers AND child AND human rights
Synonyms: Can you give synonyms or alternative phrases for:

- Asylum seeker
- Child
- Refugee
Creating an effective search query (4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Alternative 1</th>
<th>Alternative 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept 1</td>
<td>Asylum seekers OR Refugees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 2</td>
<td>Child OR Minor OR Juvenile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 3</td>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Asylum seekers OR refugees) AND (child OR minor OR juvenile) AND human rights
Creating an effective search query (5)

<table>
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<th>Alternative 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept 1</td>
<td>&quot;Asylum seeker*&quot; OR Refugee*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 2</td>
<td>Child* OR Minor? OR Juvenile*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept 3</td>
<td>&quot;Human rights&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

("Asylum seeker*" OR refugee*) AND (child* OR minor? OR juvenile*) AND “human rights”
My search string

(“Asylum seeker*” OR refugee*) AND (child* OR minor? OR juvenile*) AND “human rights”
Build your own search string
Build your own search string table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human rights of child asylum seekers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Main concept</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept 1</td>
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<td>Concept 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:

Identify keywords and consider synonyms, alternative spellings, broader and narrower terms
- Apply truncation (usually *) for alternative word endings and plurals
- Use wildcards (usually ?) to replace single characters
- Define relationships with Boolean logic:
  - ‘and’ for both terms
  - ‘or’ for either term
  - ‘not’ to exclude a term

E.g. ("Asylum seeker*" OR refugee*) AND (child* OR minor? OR juvenile*) AND "human rights"
Apply search string to database
Which sources to use?

Scholarly search engines
- e.g. Google Scholar and SOLO Articles or Search Everything
- Easy search across tens of thousands of items
- Coverage unclear
- Quality varies
- Nearly always returns too many results

Bibliographic databases (Abstracts/indexes)
- Often dedicated to a particular subject area
- Search across key sources in the discipline - quality is assured
- Search brief details (author, article title, subject keywords, abstract)
- Should return a smaller number of more relevant results
- Often include specialist search options
- Especially good for articles, conference papers …
  sometimes less good for books, policy documents, reports
Finding bibliographic databases tip 1

Databases A-Z
(https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/az.php)
• A-Z listing all databases
• Choose Subject tab
Finding bibliographic databases tip 2

Look for database type “Abstracts/Indexes”

Click ‘more’ for more info

For bibliographic databases choose “Abstracts/Indexes”
Databases and catalogues: bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ask/workshops

- Sciences / Medicine
  - Scopus
  - Web of Science
  - Find a database using Databases A-Z
- Social Science subjects
  - ProQuest
  - Web of Science
  - SOLO subject searching (for books)
  - Find a database using Databases A-Z
- Humanities subjects
  - EBSCO
  - SOLO subject searching (for books)
  - Web of Science
  - Find a database using Databases A-Z
- History
  - Historical Abstracts
  - SOLO subject searching (for books)
  - Web of Science
  - Find a database using Databases A-Z
- English Literature / Modern Languages and Literature / Linguistics
  - MLA
  - SOLO subject searching (for books)
  - Find a database using Databases A-Z