Best practice for literature searching

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| UTS: LiBRARY |

**Stages of your search**

**What is a literature search?**

A systematic and comprehensive method of finding relevant literature on your topic.

**Why?**

* Review existing theories and evidence
* Identify key authors and publications
* Identify current research / trends on your topic
* Help you to broaden or narrow your topic
* Identify research methodologies and models

**How?**

1. **Background reading and preparation**

**Purpose**: get an overview of your topic, a sense of terminology used, key authors or texts, find out what’s already been explored in this area.
 **Methods**:
* Google it!
* Google Scholar it!
* Use multidisciplinary databases to do a basic search like:
*ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, Scopus, Web of Science*
* Use subject dictionaries and encyclopedias
1. **Scope your topic**

**Purpose**: narrow / broaden your topic to fit the purpose of your literature search, identify what you need to find

**Methods**:
	* Break your topic down into key concepts
	* Identify related concepts and words
	* Identify inclusion or exclusion criteria (e.g dates, geography, theories, methods, population)
	* Identify literature types needed (e.g statistics, government data, multimedia, primary resources)
2. **Identify search tools**

**Purpose**: identify where you might find the literature needed

**Methods**:
	* Use the Find Databases tool
	* Use the Library’s Study Guides
	* Identify relevant web sites or related sites (e.g. government web sites, university repositories)
3. **Search**

**Purpose**: take what you brainstormed in Step 2 to create a search strategy and then try it in your search tools from Step 3

**Methods**:
	1. Identify keywords
	2. Identify any exact phrases that may apply (e.g. “sustainable development”)
	3. Identify if you need truncation or wildcards (e.g sustainab\* to find sustainable, sustainability)
	4. Combine your keywords using Boolean operators (AND OR NOT)
	5. Put your words together to run a search (e.g. “sustainable development” AND econom\*)
4. **Evaluate & Revise**

**Purpose**: see if your search strategy brought back relevant results, and also revise your search as needed to improve it

**Methods**:
	* Browse titles and abstracts
	* Revise your search strategy as needed (e.g. broaden / narrow, add exclusions)
	* Evaluate if you need to revise the list of search tools
5. **Manage your results**

**Purpose**: keep track of your search strategy and results so you can easily replicate further down the track

**Methods**:
	* Use referencing software (e.g. EndNote, Refworks, Mendeley)
	* Use a document to divide your results up (e.g. theory, methodology, results)
	* Set up search alerts (e.g. Google Scholar alerts, database alerts, journal table of content alerts)