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Research Skills / Critical Thinking / Information Literacy

## Composing a Search Strategy

### I. Write a research question about your subject:

Examples:

Which crime prevention programs are most effective at cutting down on repeat offenses of juvenile delinquents?

What are the effects of pollution on frogs in marshlands?

How did Lewis Carroll portray madness in Alice in Wonderland?

How can wireless technology improve patient care in hospitals?

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### II. Write down the key concepts found in your topic sentence:

Key concepts from one of the examples:

Wireless technology, patient care, hospitals

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Write 2 or 3 key concepts in your question. If your question contains more than three keywords, you might need to do multiple searches and synthesize the results.

### III. Find Synonyms of (or words related to) your concepts:

Synonyms of example concepts:

#### **Wireless technology / patient care / hospitals**

PCS services	patient recovery	clinics
Wireless lan	patient treatment	emergency rooms

#### **List synonyms or words related to concepts in your own topic sentence:**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

### IV. Connect Your search terms with Boolean Operators

*And* narrows your search:

A search for Wireless technology and patient care and hospitals will retrieve *only* articles about *all three* concepts.

*Or* broadens your search:

A search for patient care or patients or medical records will retrieve *all* articles about *any of the three* concepts.

### V. Enter your terms into one of our library databases:

As needed, substitute or include other terms from your list of synonyms and related concepts. Keep in mind that articles you retrieve can be read to find additional search terms, such as important people, related concepts, and/or Library of Congress subject headings. These new words can be added to your next search.

### VI. If You Need Help

Always feel free to ask a librarian for help!