

Hawkeye Community College Library

Pre-research planning guide

Use these steps to refine your search strategy for more effective results!

1. What are you researching? Describe your topic in a sentence or question (this is your “research statement.”)

2. Identify the key words or concepts from your research statement.

3. Brainstorm synonyms or related terms for those key words or concepts:

4. Use Boolean connectors AND, OR, NOT with the above key words to form some “search strings” (*Example*: cigarettes AND “health risks” NOT asthma.) NOTE: Many online databases and search engines automatically insert the word AND in between words in a search string. Using quote marks forces multiple words to be searched together as a unit or a concept.