INFORMATION LITERACY MODULE

Unit 2: Locating information sources

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this learning experience you should be able to:

- Identify the relevant search approach based on an information need

- Analyse the topic of a defined/specific task (such as an assignment)

- Develop a search string based on an information need using tools such as Boolean operators, truncation and parenthesis

- Apply a search string to general search engines and academic databases

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

These learning outcomes will be evident when:

- The relevant search approach is identified based on a specific information need

- The topic of a defined/ specific task is divided into action, theme and limiting words

- A search string is developed using tools such as Boolean operators, truncation and parenthesis

- A search string is applied to general search engines and academic databases.

Search approach

Selecting a search approach

Extensive knowledge (Professor)
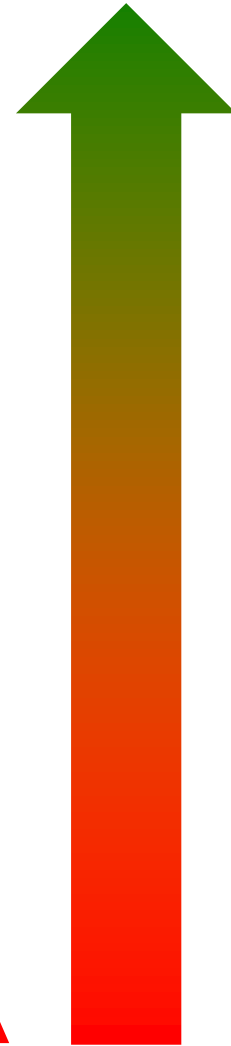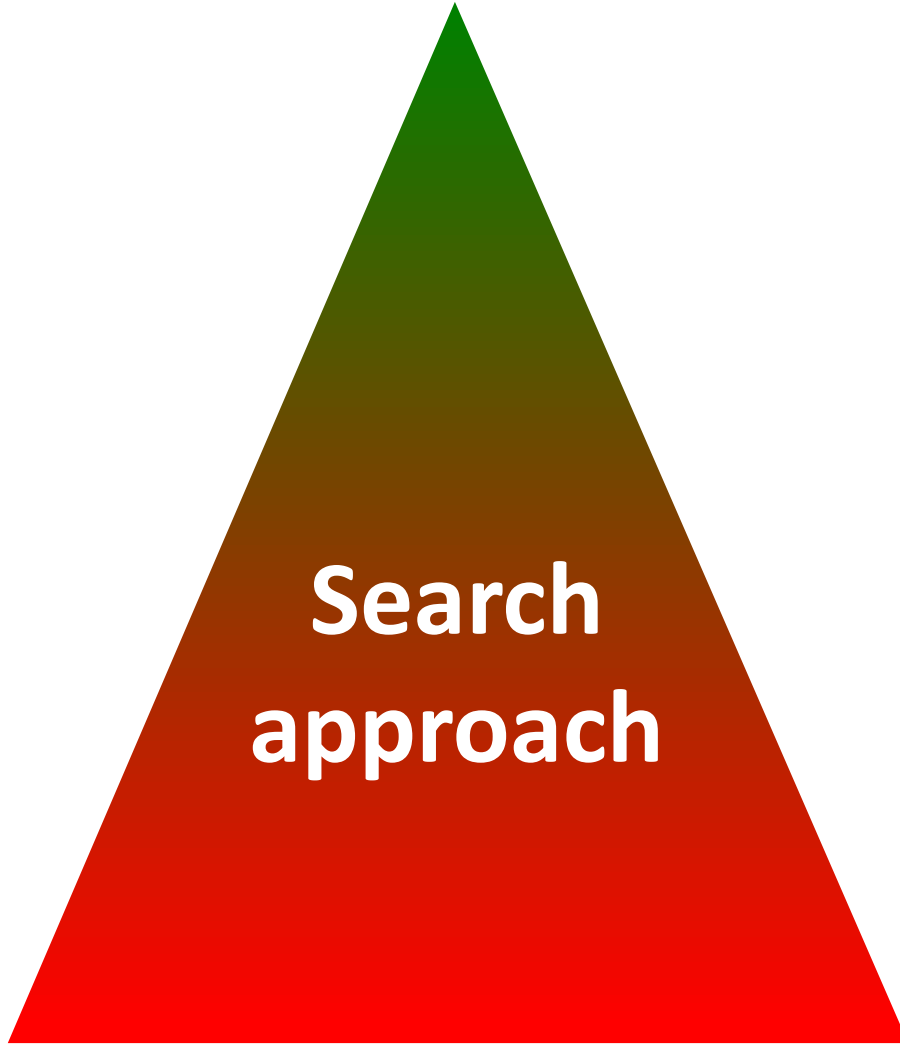
Existing level of knowledge about a topic

Little or no knowledge (first year student)

Selecting a search approach

Analysing an assignment topic

DEVELOPING A SEARCH STRATEGY

3 Steps

Analyse the topic

Develop concepts

Develop a search string

Step 1: Analyse the topic

SEARCH STRATEGY WORKSHEET

In order to find relevant information you must follow a systematic and organised approach (also called a search strategy). This worksheet helps you to develop a basic search strategy in **3 easy steps**. If you follow the steps below, you will save a lot of time when searching for information. You will also find the most relevant information on your topic.

1. Write down your topic and <u>underline</u> the action-, topic- and limiting words

Divide the topic into action-, topic- and limiting words.

Action words	**Topic words**	**Limiting words**

• Words that tells you what to do.
 • Verbs
 • Examples:
   • Compare
   • Discuss
   • Evaluate
	• Words that describe what the assignment is all about.
	 • Nouns
		• Words that narrow the topic to a workable scope.
		 • Categories or criteria:
		   • Geographic location
		   • Time frame
		   • Other groupings

Step 2: Develop concepts

2. **Divide the topic- and limiting words into concepts and list all the concepts**
Use as many concept boxes as needed. List synonyms for each concept. Include singular and plural forms, spelling variations and different word endings.

	CONCEPT	CONCEPT	CONCEPT	CONCEPT
TERM	_____	_____	_____	_____
	or	or	or	or
TERM	_____	_____	_____	_____
	or	or	or	or
TERM	_____ AND	_____ AND	_____ AND	_____
	or	or	or	or
TERM	_____	_____	_____	_____
	or	or	or	or
TERM	_____	_____	_____	_____

http://www.thesaurus.com

- The action- and limiting words of the assignment topic represents the main concepts.

- Basic techniques to identify variants:
    - Synonyms and alternating terms,
    - Subject headings and index terms (tags) and
    - Abbreviations.

Step 3 - Construct search string

| 3.	**Construct your search string using a) boolean operators, b) truncation and c) parentheses**
	Boolean operators
	Boolean operators are simple words (AND, OR, NOT or AND NOT) that are used to combine or exclude keywords, phrases and concepts in a search, resulting in more focused and productive results.
	"OR" broadens your search by gathering records in which one or more terms appear
	"AND" narrows your search by requiring that at least one term from each concept group be present
	Truncation
	Truncation is used to search for words containing a common root, with any number of letters preceding or following that root. To truncate a word use the "*" symbol
	Parentheses
	Parentheses are brackets ( ) that you use around terms that are connected with OR

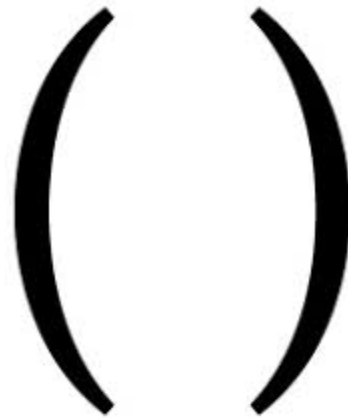# Boolean operators
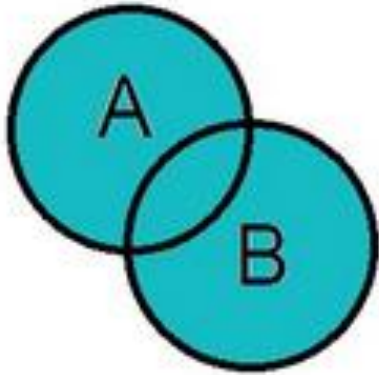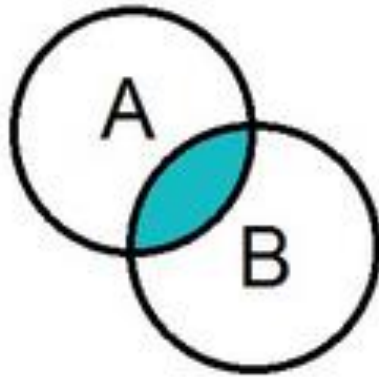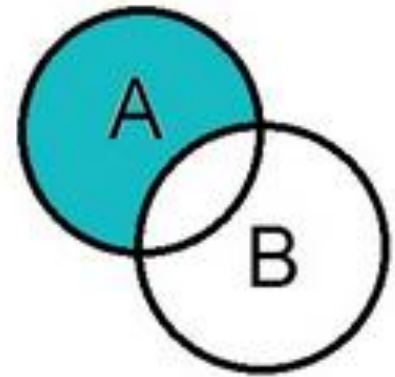
OR   **AND**   **NOT**

Truncation * most common

Prefix ROOT ~~Suffix~~ *

Educat**e**
Educat**ion**
Educat**or**
Educat**ional**
Educat**ing**

} Educat *

Parenthesis ( )

Parenthesis influences the way in which a search works

If parentheses (brackets) are used, the parts of the search contained within them are performed first.

(3-2)+(1+3)=
(1)+(4)=
5

Which one is correct?
Sustainability AND Reuse OR Recycle
(Sustainability AND Reuse) OR Recycle
Sustainability AND (Reuse OR Recycle)

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Application of a search string to databases

A demonstration of how a search string is applied to databases was presented during the lecture

Summary

Parenthesis ( )

Parenthesis influences the way in which a search works

If parentheses (brackets) are used, the parts of the search contained within them are performed first.

(3-2)+(1+3)=
(1)+(4)=
5

<u>Examples</u>
Sustainability AND Reuse OR Recycle
(Sustainability AND Reuse) OR Recycle
Sustainability AND (Reuse OR Recycle)

DEVELOPING A SEARCH STRATEGY

3 Steps

- Analyse the topic
- Develop concepts
- Develop a search string

Truncation * most common

Prefix ROOT ~~Suffix~~ *

Educate
Education
Educator
Educational
Educating
} Educat *

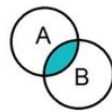Divide the topic in action-, topic- and limiting words.

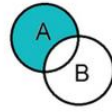| Action words	Topic words	Limiting words
• Words that tell you what to do. • Verbs • Examples: • Compare • Discuss • Evaluate	• Words that describe what the assignment is all about. • Nouns	• Words that narrow the topic to a workable scope. • Categories or criteria: • Geographic location • Time frame • Other groupings

Boolean operators

OR   AND   NOT

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- Basic techniques to identify variants:
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  o Subject headings and index terms (tags) and
  o Abbreviations.

Thank you