# Formulate your research question.

Write your research question here.

Identify the key concepts of your research question.

The key concepts make up the “search blocks” of your search strategy:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Key concept 1 | Key concept 2 | Key concept 3 | Key concept 4 |

# Now analyse each concept in detail. Identify synonyms and subject headings (e g MeSH terms). ­

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Key concept 1 | Key concept 2 | Key concept 3 | Key concept 4 |

# Search the databases by:

* + using **OR** to combine the search terms **within** each search block
  + using **AND** to combine your **different search blocks.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Search tips** | * **Is there a controlled vocabulary you might use?** Most databases use a controlled vocabulary – a preset list of words that articles are tagged with to describe the content and make retrieval easier. In PubMed these are called *MeSH terms, Medical Subject Headings*. Find MeSH terms in the [US National Library of Medicine’s MeSH database](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/) or use *SvenskMeSH* (<https://mesh.kib.ki.se/>), a Swedish translation of the list. CINAHL has its own list of words called *CINAL Subject Headings* that are found in CINAHL. Free-text databases such as Web of Science do not have subject heading lists. * **Have you found a really good article?** Look it up in a database and see what subject headings and keywords it has been tagged with. Do the subject headings of your “key article” suit your research question? If so, search for additional articles with the help of those subject headings. * **Do you find it difficult to come up with synonyms?** Look at the words that occur in the titles and abstracts of your search hits. Can you identify any additional words that might suit your research question? Try to test search for articles using those words. * **One word may come in a variety of spellings and forms.** Try different variants. * **Truncation** is a search technique that helps you search for parts of words. If you, for example, search for *view*\*, the articles in your search result will contain words such as *view, view****s****,* and *view****point****,* etc. In PubMed you use a special character, an asterisk \*, when truncating terms. * **Phrase searching** means that you enclose a phrase, for example “day surgery”, within quotations marks. This way, you will only get hits in which the phrase has that *exact* spelling. * **Block searching** is a good way of structuring your search query. It means that you break down your research question into separate parts: “search blocks”. First search for each part on its own. Then combine all your search blocks. Learn more at <https://kib.ki.se/en> |

# Remember to save your search history.

This worksheet by the Karolinska Institutet University Library is inspired by [*Arbetsblad – ett verktyg för att jobba med sökord*](https://blogg.mah.se/ihuvudetpabibliotekarien/2016/04/04/arbetsblad-ett-verktyg-for-att-jobba-med-sokord/) by Malmö University Library.