SEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH SELECTION

You should have

- Decided your title
- Recognised your aim
- Started to look for literature
- Defined your first draft of thesis objectives

Next steps

- Finding correct literature
- Beginning your search strategy document
- Start writing the research proposal
- Finalise title, aim and objectives (I will help with this)

Your aim

- You are conducting a systematic review of data on the topic you have chosen
- A systematic review is a type of literature review that collects and critically analyses multiple research studies or papers
- It uses SECONDARY DATA only

Data and Research you will need to find …

- Most importantly

- EMPIRICAL RESEARCH
- PRIMARY STUDIES (i.e. RCT or randomised controlled trials, case control studies, cross sectional studies etc)

Empirical (‘based on experience’) Studies

- Research studies conducted scientifically
- Using clear method of observation, experience or experiment
- i.e. observable , Measurable , Repeatable studies
- Usually include identification of research question, methodology / method, results, and discussion

- YOU WILL NEED AT LEAST 10 OF THESE

Other evidence to gather

- Reports (i.e. health or government)
- Articles (journal ONLY)
- Systematic reviews
- Discussion papers
- Quantitative research
- Qualitative research

Quali and Quanti

- What do each of these terms mean?
- What type of research will you find in each?
- Can empirical data ever have BOTH types of results?

Hierarchy of Evidence

- In order of importance / falsifiability:
- Randomised controlled trials
- Cohort studies , case controlled studies
- Surveys
- Case reports
- Qualitative studies
- Expert opinion
- Anecdotal opinion
- REMEMBER YOU ARE CONDUCTING YOUR OWN Systematic review and meta analysis

SEARCH STRATEGY

- Evidence of structured organisation of terms used to search a database
- A technique to uncover best placed evidence for your thesis
- Differences in search terms or keywords must be identified
- You will build a chart of sources found
- This will make up some of your marks within the research proposal AND thesis itself
- You MUST begin to consider your inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and Exclusion: An Example

Inclusion Criteria

- All primary research
- English and UK based only
- Academically reviewed data only
- In last 15 years only

Exclusion

- EU and USA data
- Unpublished or heavily critiqued work
- Before 2000

Where to look?

- Which databases could you use to search for your research or data?

Answer

- Google
- Googlescholar
- UWTSD Library databases
- Manually in libraries (across campus)
- Any free journal databases etc

Identifying Search Terms

- Authors refer to the same concept in different ways
- You will need to ensure you know each possible term
- Consider your title
- Is there any term that could be described differently (i.e. ‘older person’ or ‘elderly’)

TOP TIPS:

- Use a thesaurus to identify synonyms
- Search for your concepts on a search engine like Google Scholar and skim read some of the results, looking for alternative words and phrases
- If you already have a relevant article, examine the abstract or full text for alternative words and phrases

REMEMBER :

- Search strategies tend to evolve through trial and error

How to Search: Boolean Logic

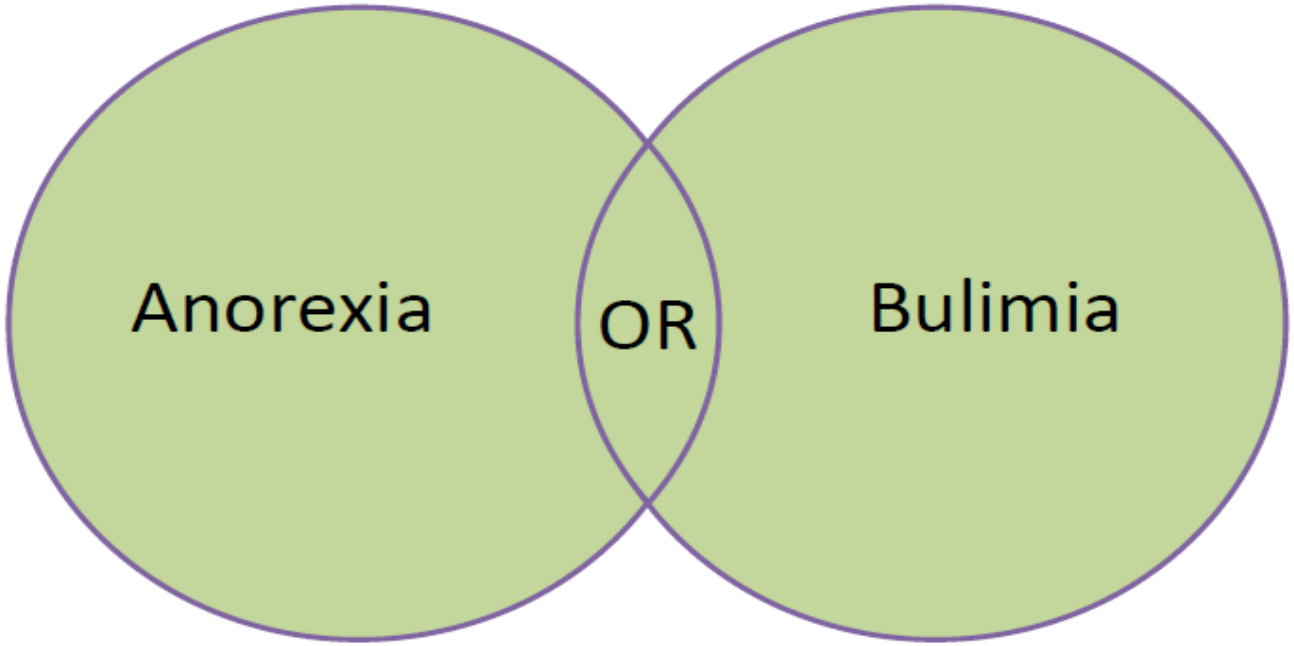
- Boolean operators (AND, OR and NOT) allow you to combine search terms in different combinations. Databases often show Boolean operators as buttons or drop-down menus that you can click to combine your search terms or results.

OR

- OR increases the number of results you retrieve and is usually used to combine synonyms to make your results more comprehensive.
- Searching for self esteem OR self worth finds articles that mention EITHER of these topics.

OR

Combining terms



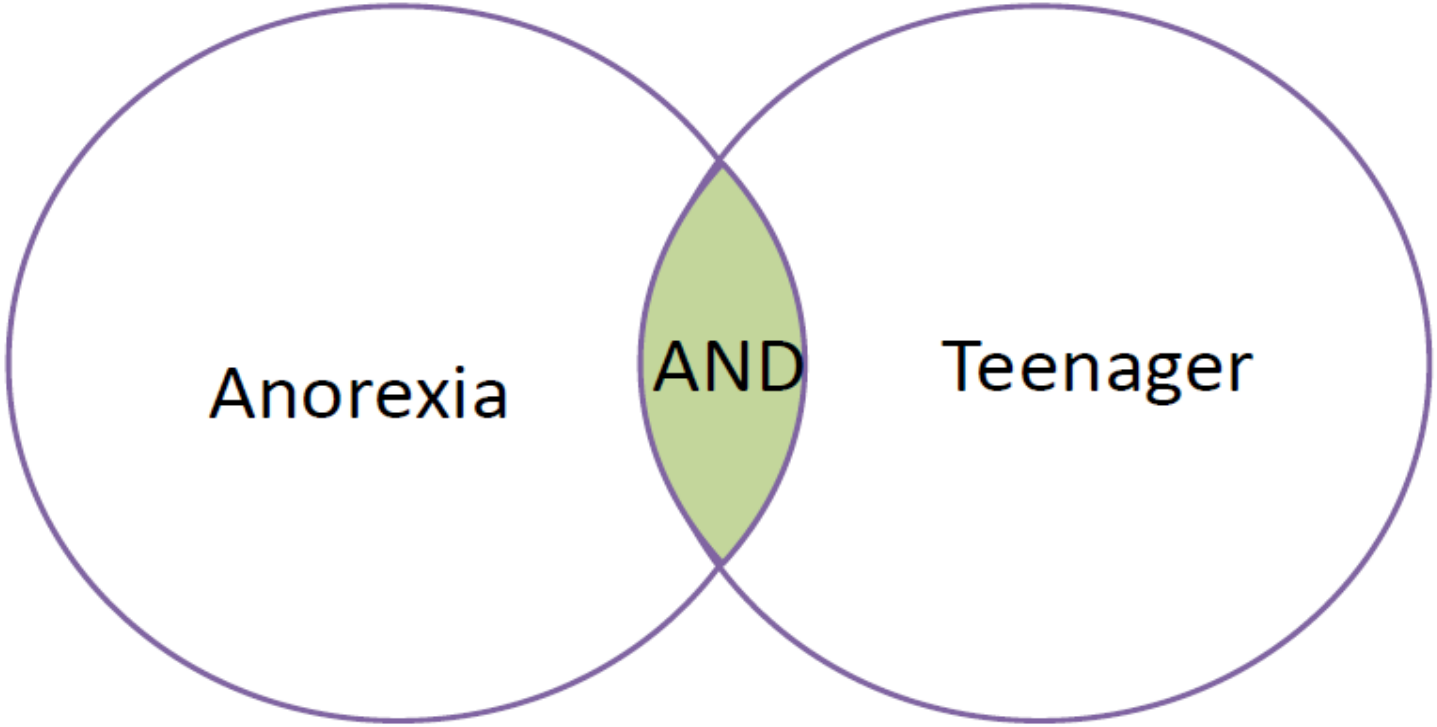
The green shaded area inside both of these circles represents what will be searched for when you combine two separate searches for 'anorexia' or 'bulimia'. Articles about either one term or the other will be retrieved.

AND

- AND reduces the number of results you retrieve and is usually used to combine different concepts to make your results more relevant.
- Searching for self esteem AND eating disorders finds articles that mention BOTH of these topics.

AND

Combining terms



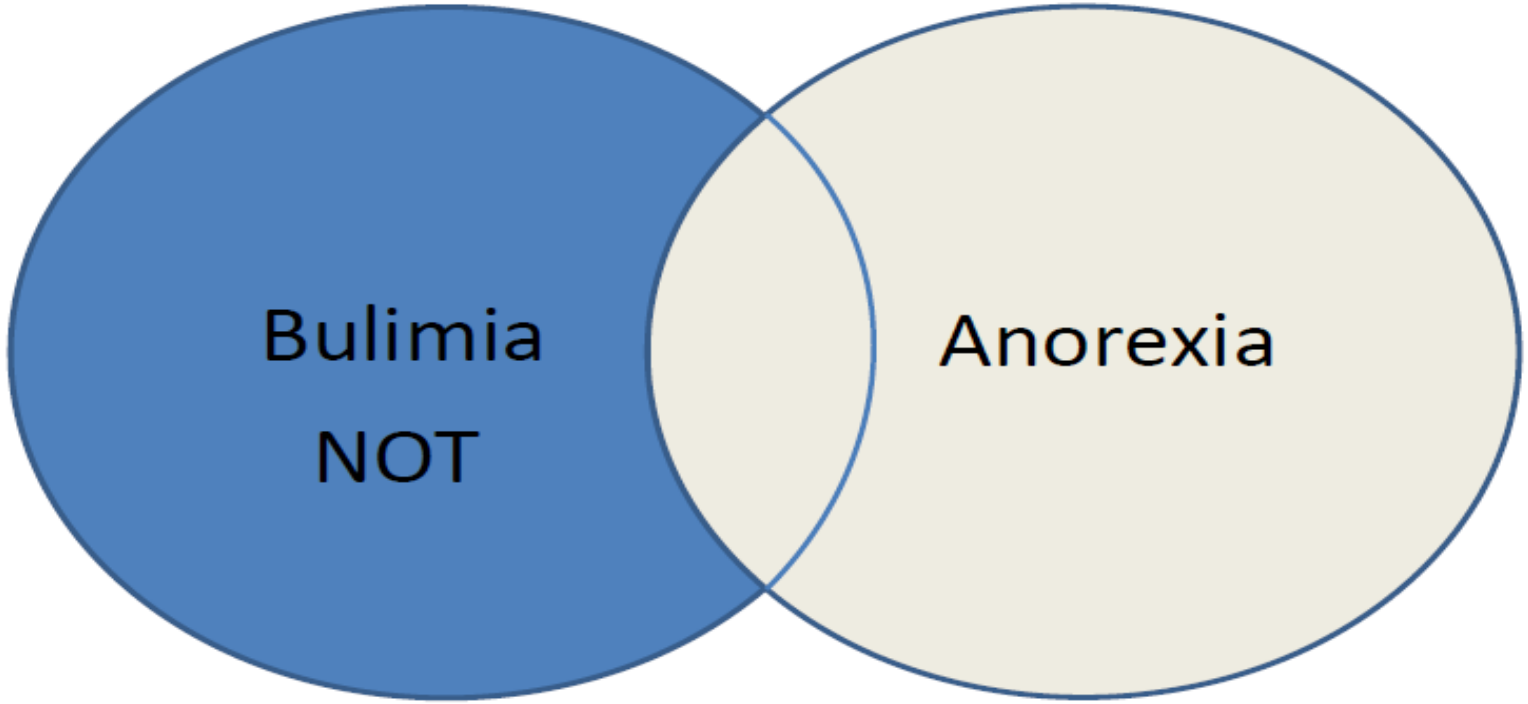
The shaded area in the middle represents what will be searched for when you combine two separate searches for ‘anorexia’ AND ‘teenager’. Only articles which contain both terms will be retrieved.

NOT

- NOT reduces the number of results you retrieve by excluding a search term. It should be used with caution in case you inadvertently exclude relevant references.
- Searching for self esteem NOT eating disorders finds articles that mention self esteem but removes any articles that mention eating disorders.

NO

Combining terms



The shaded area represents what will be searched for when you search for 'bulimia' NOT 'anorexia' so the search will exclude any results which contain the word bulimia, even if they contain the word anorexia.

How To Search : Keyword Search

- Keyword in this context are natural language, or free text words and phrases, that you enter into database search boxes
- This is **different** to searching with subject headings
- A keyword search generally only looks for your search terms in the title and abstract of a reference in the research database
- This is because databases do not usually contain the full text of the articles, just information about an article (such as the author, article title, date, journal title, and an abstract where available)
- Some databases will only find the exact word or phrase you type: do not make any errors

How to Search : Subject headings

- Some databases give an option of: ‘MAP TO SUBJECT HEADING’
- This is where the database helps you to find the most comprehensive amount of literature possible in relation to your search
- Remember that terms, keywords and spellings could be different, so you may miss something vital
- When research is added to a database, the database itself will allocate subject headings to the work
- Online databases use subject headings to help you search for items also
- IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO USE THEM

How to Search: Truncation

- Truncation is useful for finding singular and plural forms of words and variant endings
- Shorten your keyword to its 'stem' or 'trunk‘
- You MUST add the truncation symbol
- Many databases use an asterisk *as their truncation symbol
- Check the database help section if you are not sure which symbol to use
- For example, typing therap* into a search box will find references containing any of these words: *therapy, therapies, therapist or therapists.*

How to Search : Wildcards

- A wildcard finds variant spellings of words
- Many databases use a question mark ? as their wildcard symbol
- Check the database help section if you are not sure which symbol to use
- Wildcards are useful for finding British and American spellings, for example, *behavio?r* will find behaviour and also *behavior.*

How to Search : Exact Phrase

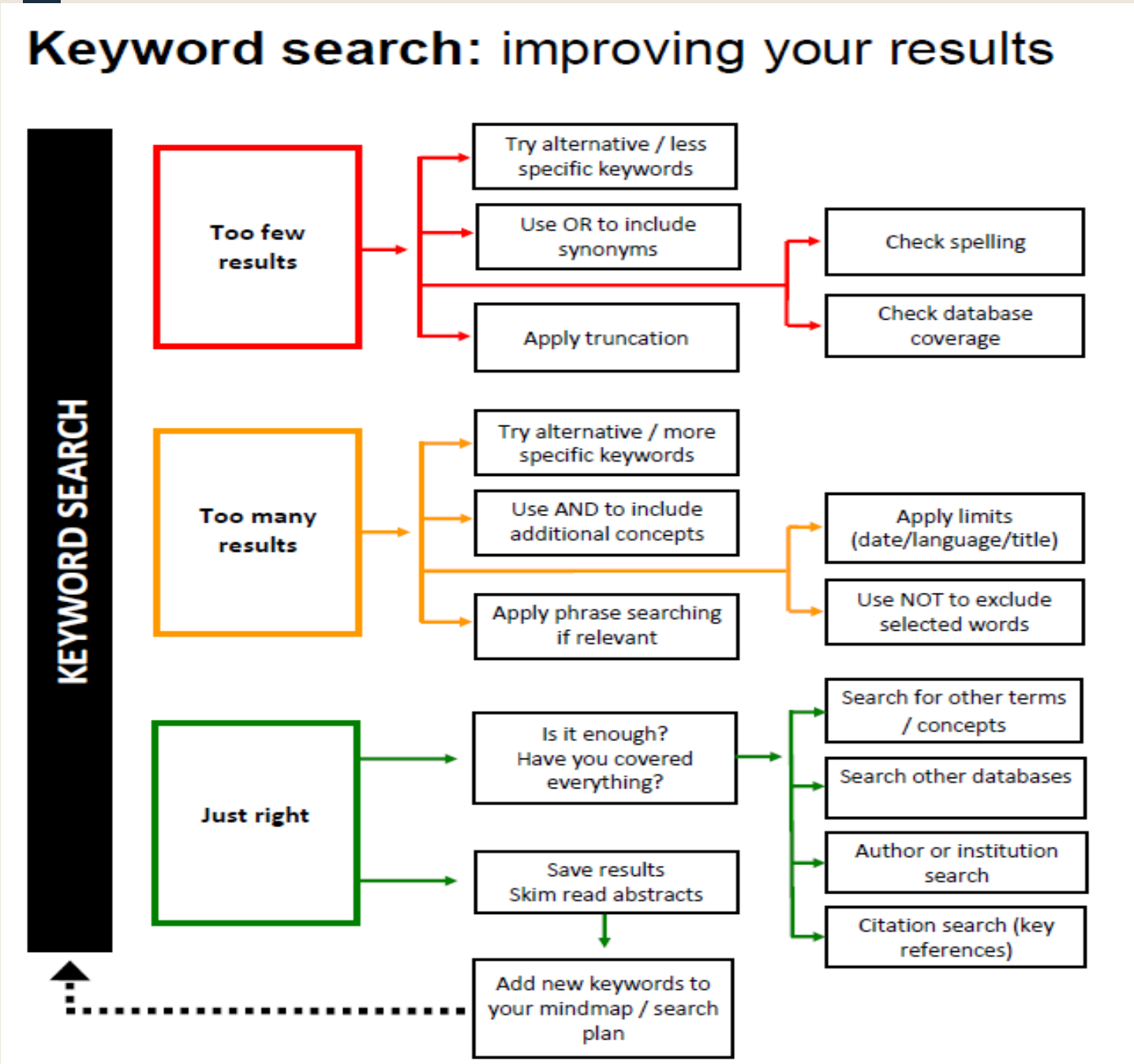
- If you want words to appear next to each other in an exact phrase you must enclose the words in quotation marks
- For example: ‘older person‘
- This applies in many research databases
- Phrase searching decreases the number of results you get and makes your results more relevant
- If you don't use quotation marks, the database may search for the individual words next to each other in any order i.e. *… This one was older, but one other person…*
- anywhere in the title or abstract but not necessarily together i.e. *…high amount of older children. In all cases but one, one person was present and found to be residing …*

EXAMPLE

Example search strategy

Search carried out in PsycINFO (OvidSP) 2002 onwards. Date of search 18/08/14

#	Searches	Results
1	eating disorder*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	13620
2	appetite disorder*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	8
3	bulimi*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	4616
4	anorexi*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	6586
5	exp Eating Disorders/	12538
6	1 or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5	17269
7	(cognitive adj2 therap*).mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	19403
8	cbt.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	7075
9	talking treatment*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	19
10	talking therap*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	101
11	cognitive behavior therapy/	11440
12	7 or 8 or 9 or 10 or 11	20095
13	self esteem.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	19973
14	self worth.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	2028
15	self regard.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	194
16	self value.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures]	37
17	self confidence.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key	3438



Don't forget to use your subject librarians and librarians if you get stuck … they are there to help!

We also have libraries in:

- Townhill
- Mount Pleasant
- Carmarthen
- Lampeter

NEXT

- Start your search strategy sheet TODAY