

Walter E. Helmke Library

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Your Integrated Information Foraging Environment > Research Tools > Foraging for Information Worksheet

Foraging for Information Worksheet

Use this worksheet to develop the set of **information literacy skills** that will make you an **efficient information forager**.

To get started, **plan** your search strategy and **scan** your wider environment for ideas and resources.

Begin by **hunting** for specific information whose value you know that you can trust.

Practice **gathering** so that unexpected but rewarding information comes your way.

While we present these skills in a logical order, it always pays to be **flexible**, **vary your strategy**, and **learn from experience**.

#1 KNOW WHAT YOU NEED – What is the nature of your assignment?

#2 SELECT THE BEST RESOURCES – Use **Find Resources By... Subject** to decide where to begin your search.

#3 DEVELOP A SEARCH STRATEGY – **Ask a Librarian** for help in selecting the right words or terms to describe your information need. We can teach you useful search techniques and concepts (like some of these below).

What **KEYWORDS** describe your topic?

Example: *standardized tests in high schools*

What **SYNONYMS** or related terms describe each of the facets or concepts within your topic?

Example: *tests or testing or assessment* [concept 1]

high schools or secondary schools or secondary education [concept 2]

What **SUBJECT HEADINGS** seem to be associated with periodical articles and books on your topic?

Example: *educational tests and measurement, test bias, achievement tests*

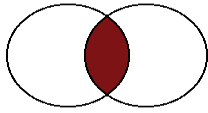
List some keywords, synonyms, or subjects for
Concept 1

List some keywords, synonyms, or subjects for
Concept 2

Use **BOOLEAN OPERATORS AND, OR, NOT** to develop your search strategy.
The shaded areas represent the amount of information you should expect to find:

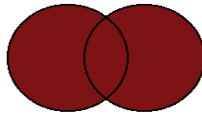
AND

Narrows your search (intersection)
Example: *tests AND schools*



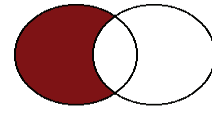
OR

Broadens your search (union)
Example: *tests OR exams*



NOT

Narrows your search (exclusion)
Example: *tests NOT eye*



Too many results? Use **NARROWER** (more specific) terms. Use more **AND** terms. Use **NOT** cautiously!
Too few results? Use **BROADER** (more general) terms. Use more **OR** terms.

Use **TRUNCATION** to retrieve variant forms of a term. Common truncation symbols include: * \$? # !
Example: *school** OR *educat** OR *teach**

Use **PARENTHESES** to group related terms. Just as with algebra, do the operation in the parentheses first.
Example: *(tests OR testing OR assessment) AND (high schools OR secondary schools) AND (research OR study)*

#4 RETRIEVE WHAT YOU NEED – Try out the library's superb delivery tools, such as **FIND IT** or **E-Journal Finder**.

#5 EVALUATE WHAT YOU FIND – Ask yourself, does this information pass the **Credibility, Relevancy, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose Test**? See **Is Your Journal Scholarly?** **Is Your Web Site Credible?** for more evaluative criteria.

#6 ORGANIZE WHAT YOU SELECT – Keep a record of your **search history** so you know where to forage next, and what search strategies work best. Notice the tools in your information environment that can help you get organized.

#7 TREAT INFORMATION ETHICALLY – Avoid plagiarizing others' ideas, credit your sources, and **cite accurately**.

#8 EXPLORE INFORMATION LANDSCAPES – Branch out to follow the trails left behind by key authors and their cited references. **Cited-by links** are a great way for modern hunter-gatherers to discover relevant information.

Finally, take a moment to reflect on the information foraging process –

What did you learn today?
What next steps do you plan to take?