Part 1. Choose a topic for this assignment:

- Write down the general topic that you’re interested in researching and circle two to four keywords that would likely be in the title or abstract of an article on your topic.

Part 2. Choose appropriate research databases

- Write down the names of at least two library research databases that are likely to be the most useful for your research topic.

Part 3. Create a preliminary search strategy:

Open the first database that you chose in Part 2. Make sure to open the Advanced Search screen option in your database, if it doesn’t open automatically. Put your keywords from Part 1 into the search boxes, as shown in this example:

![Search Strategy Example](image)

If you only see one search box with no option to open a more advanced search screen, then enter your terms in the single search box, separated by the word **AND**, as shown here:

```
racial profiling AND police AND Canada
```

This is what librarians call a **search strategy**. A search strategy is simply **a plan for which search terms you are going to use, and how you are going to put them together** to find exactly what you want in a research database, and leave out things you don’t want. Notice that the search strategy above has the word ‘**AND**’ in between the search terms. This tells the database that I only want to see results that mention ALL three of these words.

- Write down your preliminary search strategy here:

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- Now, use the filter in your database to limit your search results to articles from **scholarly/academic/peer-reviewed journals**. (The name of the filter varies in different databases.)
How did that work for you?

Did you find two academic articles that will be useful for your topic? If so, great! You can skip to the last page and create APA-formatted citations for those articles. Most likely, you did not. Don’t be discouraged! Go on to Part 4 where we’ll look at ways to improve your search strategy.

Part 4. Improve your search strategy

If you didn’t find two great-sounding articles in Part 3, don’t worry. That was a very basic search strategy and was just a starting point. It usually takes several tries. That is part of the search process. Hopefully, you will learn something useful from the results of every search you try so that you can incrementally build a better strategy. Let’s look at some ways to improve your search.

If you get very few (or no) results from your first search

Make your search strategy broader, by including similar words or alternative spellings of words for an article on your topic.

- Look at the title and subject terms in your results (if any) for useful keywords to use in your search, or brainstorm some of your own. (e.g. I noticed that some of the articles from my first search were tagged with the subject term “LAW ENFORCEMENT”)
- Use another search command – the word OR – to combine these additional words in your search strategy. Put words that mean the same thing into the same box, and separate them with the word OR. This tells the database that you want to find items that match ANY of the terms in the box. TIP: If you can’t think of alternative words, type the word OR after one of your search terms, and the database might start suggesting synonyms!
- Try different spellings (especially US spellings), e.g
  - OFFENCE OR OFFENSE
- Use shortcuts to capture word variations, e.g.
  - CANAD* (with the asterisk) will match both CANADA as well as CANADIAN

Here’s a modified search strategy that includes all of these recommendations to INCREASE your results:
If you get too many results from your first search

Make your search strategy narrower, by adding more restrictions to your search.

- Add additional concepts to your search in new search boxes, e.g. BLACK
- Use quotation marks to force the database to keep certain words together, e.g. “LAW ENFORCEMENT”
- Look at the subject terms in your results. These tags have been added by the database producer to consistently identify articles on a particular topic. Once you find the “right” term in that database, use it to find other tagged articles. (e.g. RACE DISCRIMINATION instead of RACIAL DISCRIMINATION)
- Limit your search to the abstract or subject terms field [use this with caution]

Still getting way too many results?

- Think about your topic. It is probably still too broad. Look at your first 20 search results for ideas on ways to narrow your topic.

Here’s a modified search strategy that includes all of the above recommendations to DECREASE your results:

![Search Bar](image)

Important:
Put words/phrases that mean the same thing in the same box.
Put the word OR between each synonym in a box.
Add more search boxes with the plus sign.

▶ Write down the revised search strategy that worked best for you here:

```
AND
AND
AND
AND
```
Part 5: Cite your sources in APA format

 Provide APA-formatted citations for two academic articles on your topic.

 [This is just a space for your rough draft, if you wish. You will type your final citations into Moodle.]

 APA journal article citation examples: (see full APA guide at http://libguides.kpu.ca/apa)

 Article with DOI:

doi:10.1080/07448481.2011.586387

 Article without DOI:  
 *[Google the journal title and include the URL for the publisher's homepage.]*


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