Library Quick Guide: **Develop a Keyword Search Strategy**

Keyword searching is how we search Google, Yahoo!, Bing, most online search tools, and library databases such as the online catalog and article databases.

Objective of **keyword searching** is to locate a **set of records** that contain the **keywords** (in the correct context which will provide the information needed). For an online form that creates a keyword search based on your keywords and strategy, see the **NCSU Libraries Keyword Builder** noted **below**.

Use keywords/phrases
Researching: The impact of global warming on Florida
- Use only keywords/phrases: "global warming" Florida

Researching: The current treatment for diabetes mellitus
- Use only keywords/phrases: treatment "diabetes mellitus"

Put quotes around a phrase (two or more words that *must* appear in that order)
- Use: "global warming"; "income tax"; "diabetes mellitus"; "environmental science"

Eliminate unnecessary words (articles, prepositions, conjunctions)
- Do **not** use: a, an, the, of, by, on, but, for, etc.

To retrieve hits with ALL of the keywords (most search systems search for all words/ phrases entered):
Enter word(s) and/or phrase(s) (in Advanced search options, use *all of the words* or similar language)
Watch spelling
Be aware of **synonyms**: treatment could be called therapy; (*see* To retrieve hits with ANY of the keywords)
The **more words** and/or phrases you enter, the **fewer the results**
Search systems are literal, so a search for Mercedes will result in hits for the car as well as the personal name
- Use: euthanasia ethics ; "global warming" policy ; euthanasia doctors ethics

To retrieve hits with ANY of the keywords
Use OR (Boolean Operator) between words/phrases (in Advanced search options, use *one or more of these words* or similar language)
The **more words** OR'd, the **larger the results**
- Use: cars OR automobiles; "global warming" OR "greenhouse effect"; doctors OR physicians
- Use: "diabetes mellitus" (treatment OR therapy); (attorneys OR lawyers) ethics

To REMOVE words/phrases from retrieval
Use NOT between words/phrases (in Advanced search options, use *none of these words* or similar language)
Some systems allow - (minus sign)
- Use: "global warming" diesel NOT trucks

Advanced Search options generally provide search guidance as well as more options.

All search interfaces are different (even Google's is different than Yahoo!'s), so read the Help.

NCSU Libraries Keyword Builder: http://webdev.lib.ncsu.edu/lobo/keywordbuilder/

Sample Keyword Search Strategy (using *Academic Search Complete* and *Google Advanced*):

Google Advanced Search example: