Advanced Search Techniques
Keywords, Boolean Operators, and Search Strategies

Advanced Searching: Why is it different?
Involved and complex research questions require a thoughtfully formulated research strategy that uses keywords to describe and organize your search to deliver the most relevant and comprehensive results.

Identify Keywords
Keywords are the most important words or main idea about your research question/topic. They include other words or phrases (synonyms) that are related to your topic. Keywords can broaden or narrow your search.

Using Boolean Operators
Complete sentences are not used to search complex research questions/topics. Instead, keywords are connected by Boolean Operators (AND, OR, NOT) to provide more accurate search results.

- **AND** = finds sources that contain ALL keywords (narrows search results)
- **OR** = finds sources that contain ANY of the keywords (broadens search results)
- **NOT** = ELIMINATES sources containing the word after NOT (narrows search results)

Effective Search Strategies
- Keep in mind how databases, researchers, and writers describe, define, and organize content about your topic when you are formulating keywords and a search strategy.
- Use quotation marks around keyword phrases. This will ensure that the words are not searched separately. (“Business management” – search results will only contain both words together in the same order.)
- Pay attention to the titles, headings, and abstracts of your search results. Use terms and keywords found in these to improve, narrow, or broaden your search.
- Keep in mind that keywords and search terms can and will evolve as you search. Be willing to modify your search strategies and keywords.
Advanced Search Techniques Activity

Consider the following research question: Is social media contributing to fake news?

1. Identify the main idea: List the keywords included in the above question.

2. Brainstorm keywords: List synonyms for each keyword you listed above. Write down everything and anything related to the main idea.

3. Create a search strategy: Formulate 3 different search strategies (what you would type into the search box). Each strategy must include at least 2 keywords from your above list and include at least one Boolean operator (AND, OR, NOT). Don’t forget to use quotations for more accurate results.

4. Consider your results: Execute your search strategies using an actual online/database search. List 3 new keywords gathered from your search results.