How to plan your search

Searching takes time. Planning your search is a critical step in helping you locate relevant information. **Typing your assignment question as a sentence into a search tool is not the best approach.**

The following is an example of how to plan your search using the following assignment topic:

How does social media influence body image in teenagers?

How to brainstorm ideas and map out your search

1. Identify your key concepts

Look at your question or topic and try to identify the main ideas. For example:

social media	body image	teenagers

You do not need to search for task words. These tell you what to do. For example: How, Why, Explain…

2. Identify any synonyms or similar concepts

This is important as not everyone will refer to concepts in the same way.

social media	body image	teenagers
social networking sites	*body idealisation*	*youth*
Instagram	*body satisfaction*	*adolescent*
Facebook	*beauty*	*adolescence*
Snapchat	*thin ideal*	*teen*
Twitter	*thinness*	*young adult*

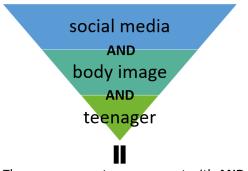Tip: Remember, you may find more as you start searching.

3. Consider different word forms

You may want to include some of these in your searches.

- ✓ Plurals: *teenager, teenagers*; *adolescent, adolescence*
- ✓ Different word forms: *diabetic, diabetes*
- ✓ Different word spellings: *body idealisation, body idealization*
- ✓ Common acronyms: **B**ody **M**ass **I**ndex, **BMI**

4. Build your search using AND, OR and "quotation marks"

Now start thinking about how you could put concepts together to form some potential searches. Start by using the connectors **AND** and **OR**.

The more concepts you connect with **AND** the more focused your search will become.

The more concepts you connect with **OR** the wider your search will become.

Now put your concepts together using **AND** and **OR**.

Phrase searching: You should use double quotations "…" to keep any words together that are phrases. This will help you find relevant results.

One box ('basic') search:

"social media" thinness (teenager **OR** adolescent)

Tip: use brackets (…) to keep synonyms together if using only one search box.

Multiple box ('advanced') search:

"social media" **OR** "social networking"

AND

"body image" **OR** "body ideal" **OR** beauty

AND

teenager **OR** youth **OR** adolescent **OR** adolescence

Tip: Use capitals when adding **AND** or **OR** to your search. Most search tools require capitals for connectors.

5. **Where to search**

UniSA Library has a range of search tools. Start with a basic search in the Library Collection or Google Scholar. Try a more sophisticated search in a Database.

Access these search tools from the Library homepage: www.library.unisa.edu.au/.

Watch **Choosing Where to Search** for more help

Top searching tips

- ✓ You do not have to use every concept you think of.
- ✓ Start with a basic search then add to it.
- ✓ Add synonyms or similar concepts using **OR**.
- ✓ If you cannot find relevant resources try a different search tool or change your search concepts.
- ✓ If you find a relevant article:
    - • read the abstract to see if there are any other concepts you could add to your search.
    - • look at the reference list. Could some of the references be useful?
    - • see what keywords the author has provided.

Watch **Plan Your Search** for more help

For further information about Library resources and services visit: www.library.unisa.edu.au/