Document your steps: Search Plan

**Name**:

**Date**:

Step 1: Research question

**Main research question[[1]](#footnote-1):**

Step 2: Information Source

Please consult the library website for discipline-related sources and select the initial and follow-up databases you want to use for your research: <https://databases.tudl.tudelft.nl>

| **Information Resource(s) selected for this search plan:** (e.g. Scopus, WorldCat or Espacenet) | **For which document type?**  (e.g. Articles, patents, books) |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

| **After this initial search I will use the following information sources** | **For which document type?**  (e.g. Articles, patents, books) |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Step 3: Concepts, synonyms and related terms

Derive concepts from the research question[[2]](#footnote-2), A) write down each concept in the search table below and B) write down synonyms and alternative terms for the concept.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1. **Concepts[[3]](#footnote-3)**: | | | |
| **B) Synonyms and/or related terms[[4]](#footnote-4):** | *concept 1:* | *concept 2:* | *concept 3:* | *concept 4:* |
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Step 4: Search query[[5]](#footnote-5)

4A: Combining synonyms and related terms

Combine all synonyms and related terms for each concept with OR[[6]](#footnote-6). Already search for your query in your chosen database and write down the results.

|  | **Query (combine with OR)** | **Number of results** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Query concept 1** |  |  |
| **Query concept 2** |  |  |
| **Query concept 3** |  |  |
| **Query concept 4** |  |  |

4B: Combining the concept queries into a search query

Combine all the query concepts with AND to make your search query.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**My complete search query:**

Step 5: Search & Refine

5A: Perform the search query in the selected information resource:

**The amount of results I got:**

5B: Rethink the search queries:

Searching is a matter of trial and error. So, to validate your search you need to try again with edited search queries to find more or fewer results.[[8]](#footnote-8)

| **How did you refine your search?** | **How did it change the search results?** |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
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Step 6: Select results[[9]](#footnote-9)

Please note down the most promising results from this search plan in your reading list below (and store the articles in a reference manager). Save at least 5, but feel free to add more!

Reading list[[10]](#footnote-10)

| **Reference from search** | **Why did you select this source?**  *(in other words: what do you expect to learn?)* |
| --- | --- |
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1. In case your research question is too complex, use sub-questions to break down your question and make a separate search plan for each sub-question. You can find more information in the TUlib module Searching and Resources under the heading [Sub-questions](https://tulib.tudelft.nl/searching-resources/making-a-search-plan/#preparing-for-your-search-plan). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The number of concepts depends on your research question. You may need more or fewer columns. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Combine concepts with AND for your query in step 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Combine synonyms and related terms with OR for your query in step 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Before you create a query, you need to know the syntax and Boolean operators that that must be used in the information resource of your choice. You can find more information in the TUlib module Searching and Resources under the heading [Search Operators](https://tulib.tudelft.nl/searching-resources/search-operators/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Don’t forget to include your concept in your concept query. Your query for concept 1 will look like this: (“concept 1” OR “synonym 1” OR “synonym 2”) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Your complete search query will look like: “(Query concept 1) AND (Query concept 2) AND (Query concept 3)” Tip: Scopus and Web of Science offer the option to save and combine previous queries. When combining your search queries, make use of the search history and combine the search sets. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For example: Include/exclude certain disciplines, document types or publication years, alter related terms/synonyms. Annotate why and how you edited it. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Save your final, combined query as an alert. You can find more information in the TUlib module Searching and Resources under the heading [Setting up alerts](https://tulib.tudelft.nl/searching-resources/setting-up-alerts/) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Please note: a reference must contain enough elements to be traceable. So use a proper reference style, e.g. APA, IEEE. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)