Searching as Strategic Exploration Building Block Activity

Bethany S. McGowan

Purdue University, bmcgowa@purdue.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fscm

Part of the Information Literacy Commons
**Searching as Strategic Exploration: Building Block Activity**

This hands-on activity will compliment a lecture on search building, which should include teaching the use of boolean operators, choosing keywords--natural language and controlled vocabulary, use of wildcards, and selecting appropriate databases.

**Step 1:** Provide students with a research question. A health sciences librarian will likely use the PICO method for research questions:

Does hand hygiene among health care workers reduce hospital-acquired infection?

Problem: hospital-acquired infection  
Intervention: hand hygiene  
Comparison: masks, no hand hygiene  
Outcome: reduced infection

Emphasize the differences between natural language and controlled vocabulary for term selection, and how that will influence search strategies across different databases.

Natural Language: P = hospital-acquired infection; I = hand hygiene

Controlled Vocabulary: P = cross infection [MeSH], cross infection [CINAHL]; I = hand disinfection [MeSH], handwashing [CINAHL]

**Step 2:** Divide students into groups. Assuming the average size of a class is 60 students, 6 students per group is the recommendation. Groups of 3-6 are ideal for this assignment. (Allocate 3-5 minutes for this step)

**Step 3:** Working in groups, students should choose 1 or 2 relevant databases, then build a search strategy for each. Use the lego kit (see accompanying document) to piece together the search. (Allocate about 10-15 minutes for this step)

**Step 4:** Have groups enter their search strategies into their selected databases, and share the results with the class (Allocate 10-15 minutes for this step)

**Step 5:** Share and compare results. Discuss term selection, database selection, etc. (Allocate 5 minutes for this step)

**Step 6:** Q & A (Allocate 5 minutes for this step)
**Directions for Activity Kit**

Each set should include:

Parentheses: 5 Open Parenthesis and 5 Closed Parenthesis  
Boolean Operators: 5 And, 3 Or, 1 Not  
Wildcards: 3 *, 3 ?, 3 ", 3 "  
Blanks: 20

Each group will receive one set, so multiply the above numbers by the maximum number of student groups you anticipate. For example, if you expect to have 10 groups of 6 you would need a total of 50 parentheses and 200 blanks.

Print on heavy stock paper, laminate, and provide dry erase markers. This will allow you to re-use your sets.

Keep your sets together--i.e. don't combine all your parentheses in one pile. This will allow for easier distribution.
NOT

OR

AND