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](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fscm)

Part of the [Information Literacy Commons](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fscm)


[https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fscm/22](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fscm/22)

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
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.