



Legal Research Strategy Planner

Step 1. Summarise the problem, and analyse the facts of the case.

Step 2. Determine the key legal issues. These become your **search terms**. Write them in the top row of the table below.

Step 3. Identify synonyms. Think laterally. Use a **legal dictionary** or **legal encyclopaedia** to find alternate words with the same meaning. Incorporate search options such as truncation, wildcards and phrase searching (see the next page).

	AND		AND
	Concept #1	Concept #2	Concept #3
Step 2 Key legal issue	Eg. negligen*	Eg. child*	Eg. "medical procedure*"
	OR	OR	OR
Step 3 Synonym	Eg. "duty of care"	Eg. infant*	Eg. "medical treatment*"
	OR	OR	OR
Step 3 Synonym		Eg. adolescen*	
	OR	OR	OR
Step 3 Synonym			

Step 4. Construct a search query for a database using **Boolean operators** (such as AND, OR). Make sure you place synonyms within brackets.

Eg. Concept #1 and Concept #2 and Concept #3

(Negligen* OR "duty of care") AND (child* OR infant* OR adolescent*) AND ("medical procedure*" OR "medical treatment*")

Search Options

Boolean Logic	AND	liability AND tort	finds both words in the same record.
	OR	slander OR libel	finds either word in same record.
	NOT	bankruptcy NOT liquidation	finds records which mention the first word but not second.
Proximity Indicators Note: these vary across databases.	Phrase Searching	"duty of care"	forces the database to search a string of words as a phrase.
	/s	circumstances /s mitigating	retrieves records which have both words in the same sentence.
	/p	defendant /p bail	retrieves records which have both words in the same paragraph.
	/n	market /5 share	retrieves words which appear with 'n' (in this instance 5) words of each other.
	pre/n	filing pre/5 bankrupt!	retrieves first word within 'n' words of second keyword in the order specified.
Truncation and Wildcards Note: symbols vary across databases.	Truncation	Lexis, LexisNexis AU and Westlaw use !; other databases *	searches for alternate endings of words eg. negligen! retrieves negligence, negligent, negligently.
	Wildcard	Lexis, LexisNexis AU and Westlaw use *; other databases ?	replaces a single character eg. defen*e retrieves defense, defense.
Nesting	(brackets)	(World trade organi?ation OR WTO) AND intellectual property.	use brackets when your search strategy contains more than one Boolean operator. Place the synonyms in brackets.