



# Wichita State University Libraries

## Translating English into Computerese - Step by Step

1. Write out your topic as a research question using complete sentences.

3. Write the keywords/key concepts that you circled in the Keywords row in the chart.

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Translating English into Computerese - Step by Step

Research Question (English): Do people who begin smoking as teens have a greater risk of developing cancer than people who start smoking later in life?

Keywords				
Alternative Terms (Synonyms)				
Broader Terms				
Narrower Terms				

Search Statement (Computerese): \_\_\_\_\_

(Tools: Boolean Operators (and, or, not), Truncation (? Or \*), Nesting ( ) )

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Research Question (English): Do people who begin smoking as teens have a greater risk of developing cancer than people who start smoking later in life?

Keywords	Smoking	teens	cancer	
Alternative Terms (Synonyms)				
Broader Terms				
Narrower Terms				

Search Statement (Computerese): \_\_\_\_\_

(Tools: Boolean Operators (and, or, not), Truncation (? Or \*), Nesting ( ) )

2. Circle the keywords/key concepts in your research question.

4. Fill in as many alternative, broader, and narrower terms as you can, increasing your options for words to use in your search statement.

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Research Question (English): Do people who begin smoking as teens have a greater risk of developing cancer than people who start smoking later in life?

Keywords	Smoking	teens	Cancer
Alternative Terms (Synonyms)	Smoke Smoker Smokers	Teenagers Teen	Cancer Neoplasm Neoplasms Neoplastic
Broader Terms	Tobacco use	Youths Young adults Children	Health problems Mortality Death
Narrower Terms	Cigarettes Cigars	Teenage boys Teenage girls 13-19 year-olds	Lung cancer

Search Statement (Computerese): \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Add slashes to indicate where truncation can be used to find alternate word endings.

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Keywords	Smok ing	teen s	cancer
Alternative Terms (Synonyms)	Smok e Smok er Smok ers	Teen agers Teen	Cancer  Neoplas m Neoplas ms Neoplas tic
Broader Terms	Tobacco use	Youth s Young adult s Child ren	Health problem s Mortality Death
Narrower Terms	Cigar ettes Cigar s	Teenage boys Teenage girls 13-19 year-olds	Lung cancer

Search Statement (Computerese): \_\_\_\_\_

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6. In the Search Statement line, place a set of parentheses for each key concept.

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Search Statement (Computerese): \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Write an "and" between each set of parentheses. This tells the computer that each of these key concepts must be included in the search.

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Search Statement (Computerese): \_\_\_\_\_ ) and  
( \_\_\_\_\_ ) and ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

(Tools: Boolean Operators (and, or, not), Truncation (? Or \*), Nesting ( ) )

8. Choose the most promising keywords, and alternative, broader, and narrower terms and group them together in the parentheses, using truncation where possible.

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Narrower Terms	Cigar ettes Cigar s	Teenage boys Teenage girls 13-19 year-olds	Lung cancer

Search Statement (Computerese): (smok? cigar? tobacco) and (teen? child? minor?) and (cancer? neoplasm?)

(Tools: Boolean Operators (and, or, not), Truncation (? Or \*), Nesting ( ) )

9. Write an "or" between each word in the parentheses to tell the computer that it can retrieve records with any of the alternative words within the parentheses.

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Alternative Terms (Synonyms)	Smok e Smok er Smok ers	Teen agers Teen	Cancer  Neoplas m Neoplas ms Neoplas tic
Broader Terms	Tobacco use	Youth s Young adult s Child ren	Health problem s Mortality Death
Narrower Terms	Cigar ettes Cigar s	Teenage boys Teenage girls 13-19 year-olds	Lung cancer

Search Statement (Computerese): (smok? or cigar? or tobacco) and (teen? or child? or minor?) and (cancer? or neoplasm?)

(Tools: Boolean Operators (and, or, not), Truncation (? Or \*), Nesting ( ) )

10. Try your search statement in your database of choice. Be aware that truncation symbols vary from database to database. Consult the database's Help function to determine the correct symbol to use. Broaden or narrow your topic depending on your search results. A search statement that works in one database may work differently in another. Experimentation with different search statements and different databases will often yield the best results. For assistance, contact the reference desk at 978-3584 or <http://library.wichita.edu/reference/researchassistance/researchassistandlibraryinstruction.htm>.