Search Strategy Worksheet

Define Topic:
State your research topic in one or two sentences. Be specific as possible.
Example: *How have school policies affected the number of girls completing secondary education?*

Identify Concepts:
Underline the keywords in your research topic above. These keywords are the concepts for your research topic. Most research topics can be divided into 2 or 3 concepts. List your concepts below.
Example:
*education policy  gender equity  high school graduation*

Now that you have created your concepts, create a list of synonyms for each concept. Synonyms and related terms help when you are ready to conduct your search for literature.
Example:
*school policy  AND  educational policy
gender equity  AND  equal education  OR  gender differences
high school graduates  OR  graduation rate  OR  educational attainment*
Perform Search:

Construct your search using Boolean operators, truncation symbols, quotations

Example:

(“school policy” OR “educational policy”) AND (“gender equity” OR “equal education” OR “gender differences”) AND (“high school graduates” OR “graduation rate” OR “educational attainment”)

Create Your Search:

✓ **AND** narrows the search by requiring that one of your terms from each concept is included in the results.
✓ **OR** broadens the search by gathering items in which one or more terms are included in the results.
✓ **NOT** narrows the search further by excluding a particular term from the results.
✓ Use quotation marks around multi-word phrases to search for the phrase exactly as written.
✓ Use a truncation symbol (* or ?) to search for words that contain a common thread. Right-hand truncation (*) is the most common form. It allows for varies endings to word stems. For example, child* will retrieve child/children/childhood.