

# Literature Review Savvy Researcher

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# Outcomes

- What is a literature review?
- Purpose of literature review

## Basics



- Select a topic
- Search the literature
- Develop the argument
- Survey the literature
- Critique the literature
- Write the review

## Steps



- Searching effectively - Boolean operators

## Searching effectively



# The Basics



# What is a literature review?

A literature review is a **critical evaluation, summary** and **explanation** of the **complete and current state of knowledge** on a **limited topic**.

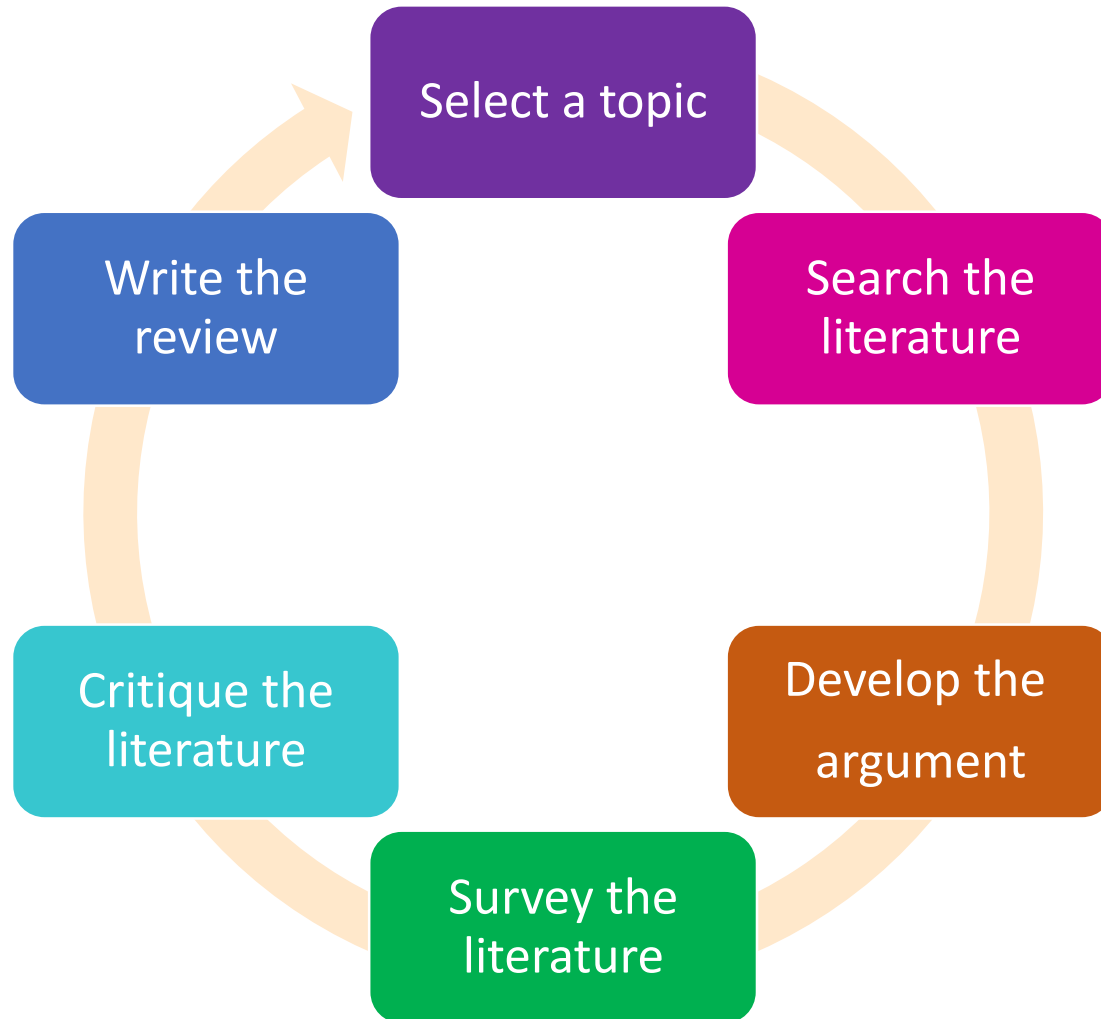
# Why do a literature review?

- Identifies gaps
- Avoids reinventing the wheel
- Building on a foundation of existing knowledge
- Finds other people working in the same field.
- Demonstrates the depth of your knowledge
- Identifies the important works in your area



# How-to literature review

# Steps of a literature review



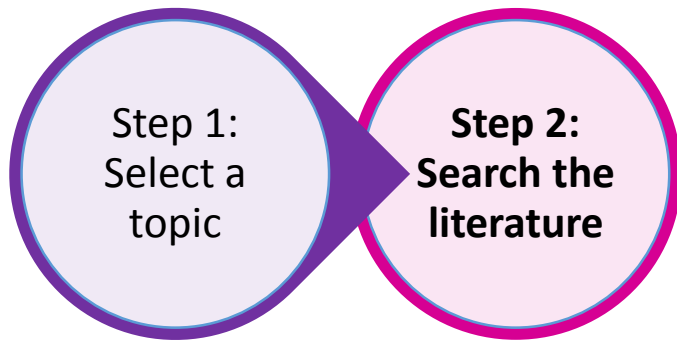


**Step 1:  
Select a  
topic**



# 1. Select a topic

- All research begins with curiosity
- Work with your supervisor / lecturer to help define your topic if you are not assigned one



## 2. Search the literature

- i. Finding the literature
  - Search strategies
- ii. Manage your literature
  - Inclusion / exclusion criteria
  - Reference Managers
  - Skimming
- iii. Evaluating the literature
  - Reading in depth
  - Map your materials

## i. Finding the literature

### **The mental and physical effect of homelessness on women**

Keywords:

Effect / impact

Homeless / homelessness

Women

Mental / psychological

...

# Search strategies

- Creating search strategies combines your keywords with using advanced search options or operators that speak directly to the database
- To get tips on how to create search strategies:
  - Use the 'search help' on the database
  - Use the specific advanced searches on the database
  - OR consult a librarian on how to use Boolean operators

# Where to search?

- Primo – discovery tool for all resources like articles, books, eBooks, newspapers, theses & dissertation, etc.
- EBSCOhost – multidisciplinary database for articles, newspapers, eBooks etc.
- SA Media - newspapers
- OpenUCT – institutional repository

# What will you be collecting?



Books,  
monographs  
and reference  
works



Journals &  
periodicals



Popular and  
trade  
magazines



Newspapers



Years

Months

Weeks

Days

## ii. Manage your literature

- Collect and select the data
  - Use the inclusion / exclusion table to help manage your literature
- Reference managers
  - Collate your literature and make referencing easy
- Skimming
  - Learn to skim read your literature



# Inclusion / exclusion criteria

AUTHOR (S) (YEAR) TITLE	PURPOSOF THE STUDY	METHOD	SAMPLE	FINDINGS	THEMES	SIMILARITIES	UNIQUENESS	DATA QUALITY
Cohen, C. I., Ramirez, M., Teresi, J., Gallagher, M. & Sokolovsky, J. (1997) Predictors of becoming redomiciled among older homeless women	Test a model to predict likelihood of older women leaving homelessnes s based on (1) individual factors; (2) acculturation process in which some women more readily adjust to homelessnes s; (3) structural/sy stemic factors	Quantitative questionnaires designed around variables in 10 broad predictor categories which made up the proposed model	201 women in New York City; Mean age=59, AA=25%, White=17% , Hispanic= 5% Other = 2% Psychotic= 40% Separated or divorced=5 3%	Those who were housed at the end of the 2 years (47%) had greater income, more support, perceived support people as more available, higher density social support, more contact with community and institutional facilities. They were less likely to exhibit psychotic symptoms but no difference in rates of depression.				

The literature review synthesis table

# Reference management tools

Programs that assist you in storing your citations, managing your citations and then inserting citations in a specific citation style while you write your assignment

There are a number of different programs that can be used – the Library currently supports the following:

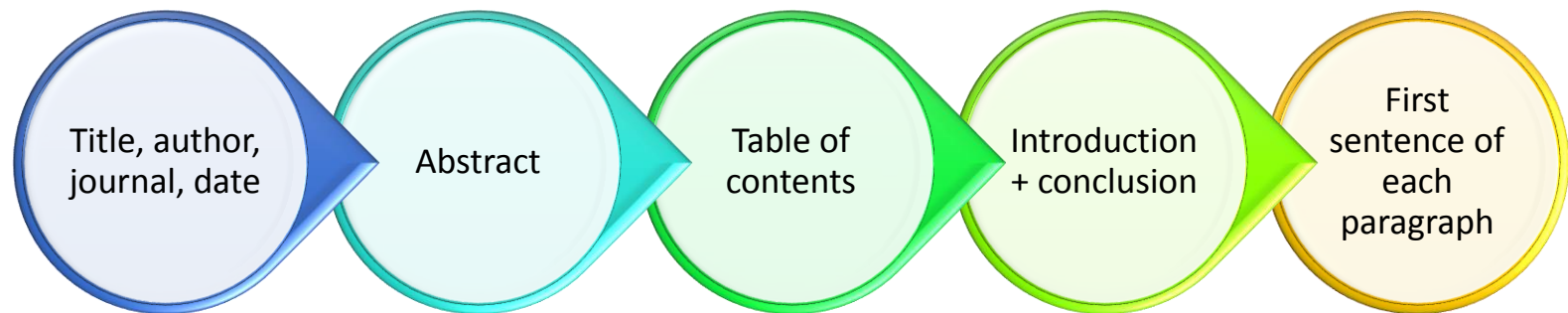
Programs  
downloadable  
from ICTS  
Website

**EndNote X8**



ProQuest  
**RefWorks**

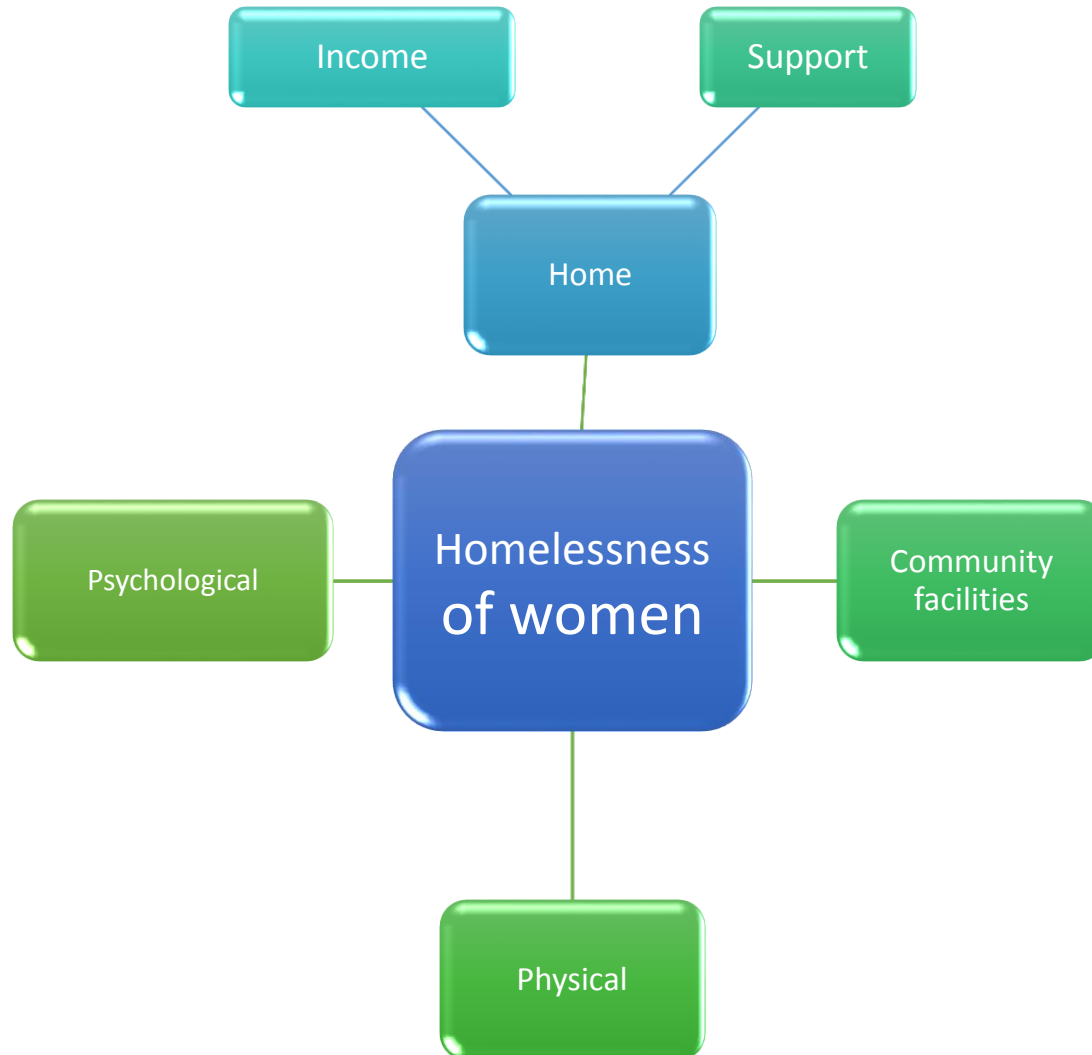
# How to skim read




# iii. Evaluating the Literature

- Read in depth
  - Take note of inclusion / exclusion criteria
  - If you find gaps or omissions – scan and skim the literature again
- Mapping the literature
  - Core idea map – subject knowledge
  - Map your literature using key descriptors as central themes
  - Map your data by each theme

# Mapping core ideas





```
graph LR; A((Step 1: Select a topic)) --> B((Step 2: Search the literature)); B --> C((Step 3: Develop the argument));
```

Step 1:  
Select a  
topic

Step 2:  
Search the  
literature

**Step 3:**  
**Develop**  
**the**  
**argument**

# 3. Develop the argument

- Build a case
- Provide arguments
- Evaluate the argument

## a. Build a case

- **Compile** and **arrange** a set of facts in a logical fashion
- **Prove** the thesis you have made about the research topic



# Example

Deciding what to wear to campus tomorrow?

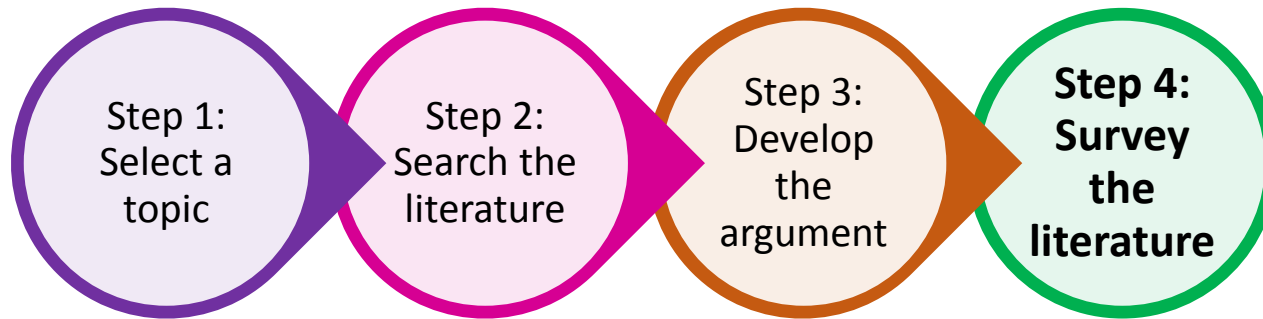
- a. Check outside – clouds are gathering
- b. Check weather forecast
- c. On the available data you will decide what to wear
- d. If rain is likely
- e. Decide to wear a raincoat and umbrella

## b. Argument

- **Argument** – logical presentation of evidence that leads to and justifies the conclusion
- **Argument of discovery** – discusses and explains what is known about the subject
- **Argument of advocacy** – analyses and critiques the knowledge gained from the synthesis of the data
- Argument is not meant to overpower but rather to **convince**
- Logical set of claims are backed with reasons

An argument = reason<sub>a</sub> + reason<sub>b</sub> + reason<sub>n</sub>

➡ conclusion

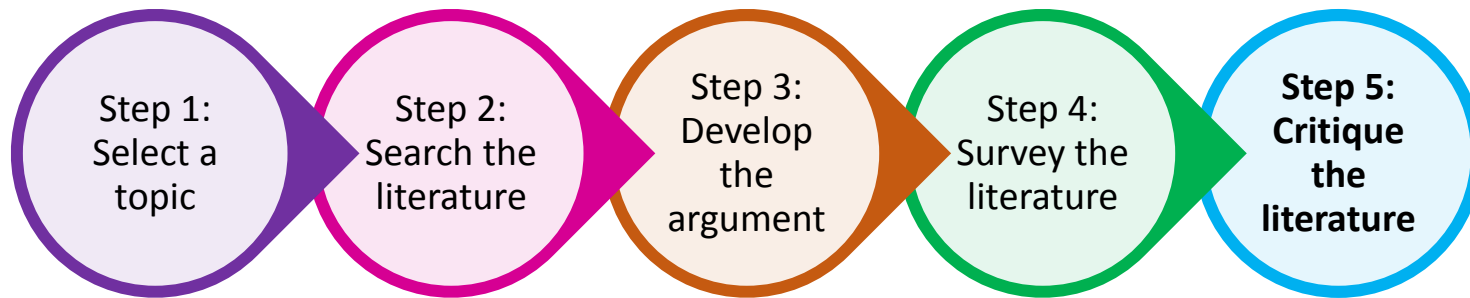


## 4. Survey the literature

- Assemble the data collected
  - You have done this in Step 2
- Synthesize the information
  - Complete your table
- Analyse the patterns of the data

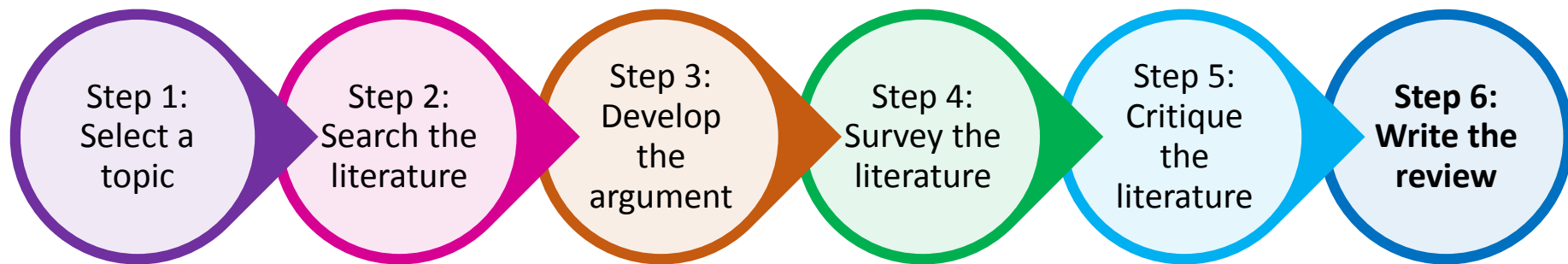
# Inclusion / exclusion criteria

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# 5. Critique the literature

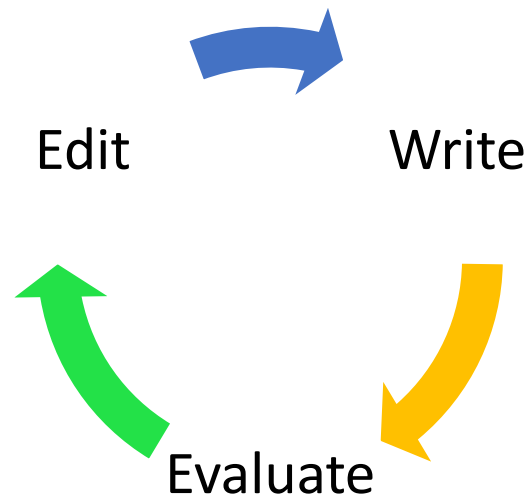
- Two steps:
  - Interpret the current understanding about the topic of research and
  - Determine how this knowledge answers your research topic
- What is the answer to the research question that you have posed given what you know about the subject?
  - If the answer is clear - thesis
  - The literature review has met its purpose
- What about the gaps or omissions?
  - Advocate for your study! It will fill the gap!





## 6. Write the review

- Write to understand
  - Act of learning and owning the subject matter
- Write to be understood



## 6. Write the Review

### Write early and write often

- the more you write, the easier it becomes and it becomes a habit

### Don't get it right, get it written

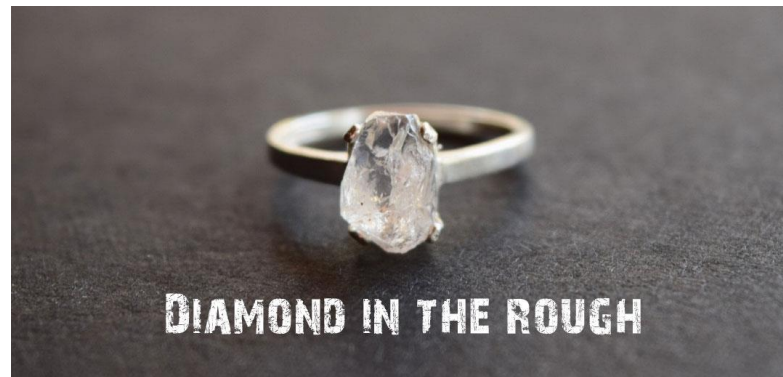
- drafting helps you to clarify your thoughts, start by writing the parts you are clear on, this identifies the bits that need more work

# Main points to remember when writing:

- A 'golden thread'
  - an overall line of argument - running through the paper, holding it together
- 'Sign-posts'
  - crisp titles, sub-titles and headings that identify the direction being followed
- 'Authority'
  - good engagement with existing literature and a comprehensive bibliography - the bibliography is the window to the paper and its author

# Things to avoid

- Avoid long quotations
  - rather paraphrase or break up the quote with your own commentary
- Avoid sloppy and inaccurate presentation and ensure that your references are correct



# Outline - Introduction

- Explains the focus
- Establishes the importance of the subject
- What kind of work has been done on the topic
  - identifies any controversies within the field
  - any recent research which has raised questions about earlier assumptions
- Background or history
- A purpose or thesis statement.

# Outline - Body

- Headings or subheadings
- Summarises and evaluates
- Major themes or topics
- Most important trends
- Any findings about which researchers agree or disagree.

# Paragraph structure

## Topic Sentence

- Summarises argument
- Indicates approach

## Elaboration

- May provide additional information or restate the topic sentence in a more extended way.

## Evidence

- Maybe be quantitative or qualitative data, or analysis of data.

## Link

- This makes the connection to the next paragraph explicit.

# Outline - Conclusion

- Summarizes all the evidence
- Shows its significance
- Highlights gaps
- Indicates how previous research leads to your own research project



# The funnel approach



Go from the general  
to the specific

Searching  
effectively



# Research Steps

Identify Possible Keywords



Construct Search Strategy



Identify Databases



Perform Your Search

# Building Search Strategies

# Identifying Keywords

- Broader vs narrow terms

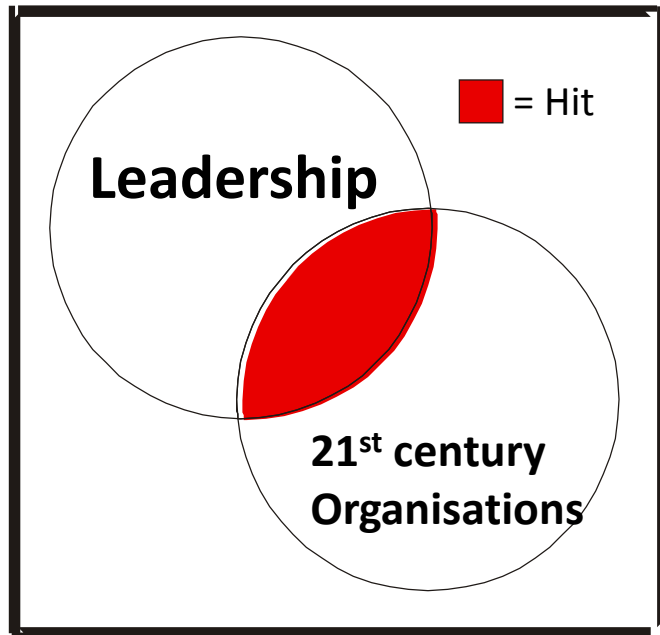


- Synonyms
  - University vs College
- British vs US terminology and spelling
  - Labor vs Labour

# Using Boolean Operators

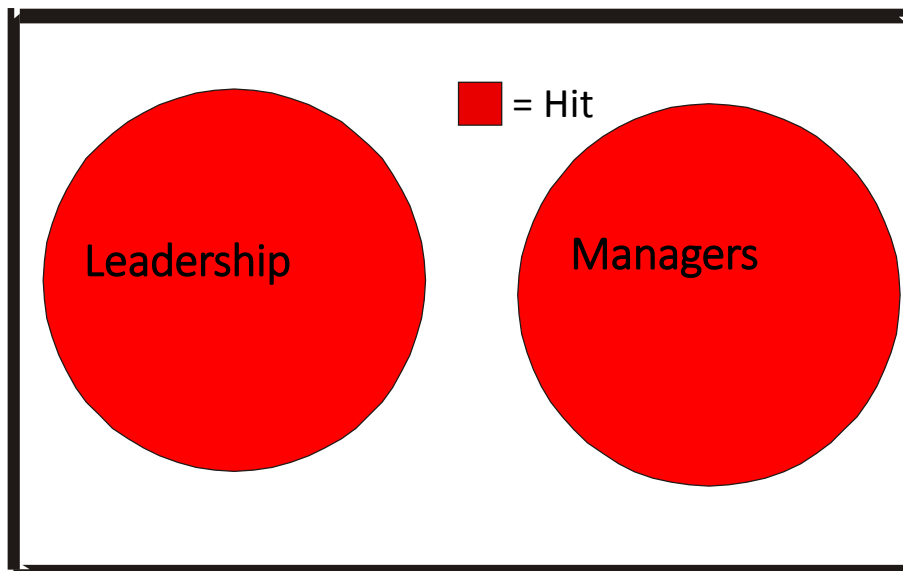
- Boolean Operators are used to **connect and define** the relationship between your search terms.
- When searching electronic databases, you can use the Boolean operators to either **narrow or broaden** your record sets.
- The three Boolean operators are **AND, OR and NOT**.

# The Boolean Operator “AND” (narrows search)



Using the Boolean Operator ‘AND’ for the topic “Leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations”

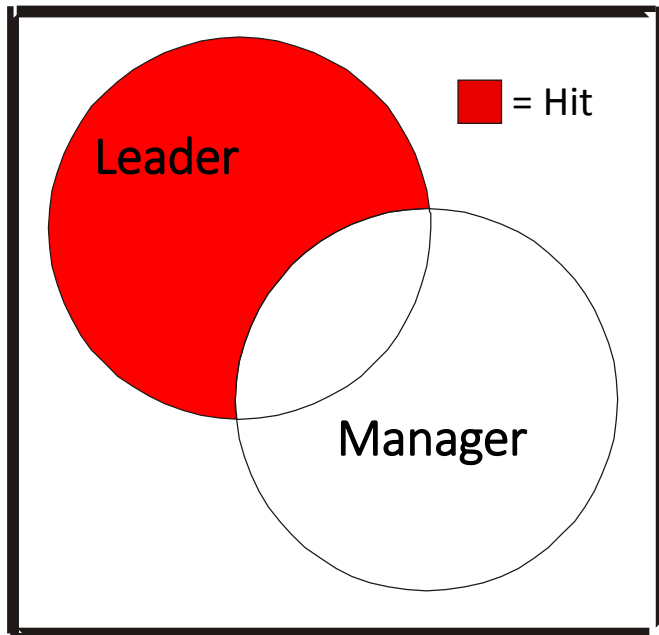
# The Boolean Operator 'OR' (synonyms, alternatives, broadens search)



Using the Boolean Operator 'OR' for the topic  
“Leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations”



# The Boolean Operator 'NOT' (exclude certain words from your search)



Using the Boolean Operator 'NOT' to exclude Manager from the topic *Leader*

# Phrases

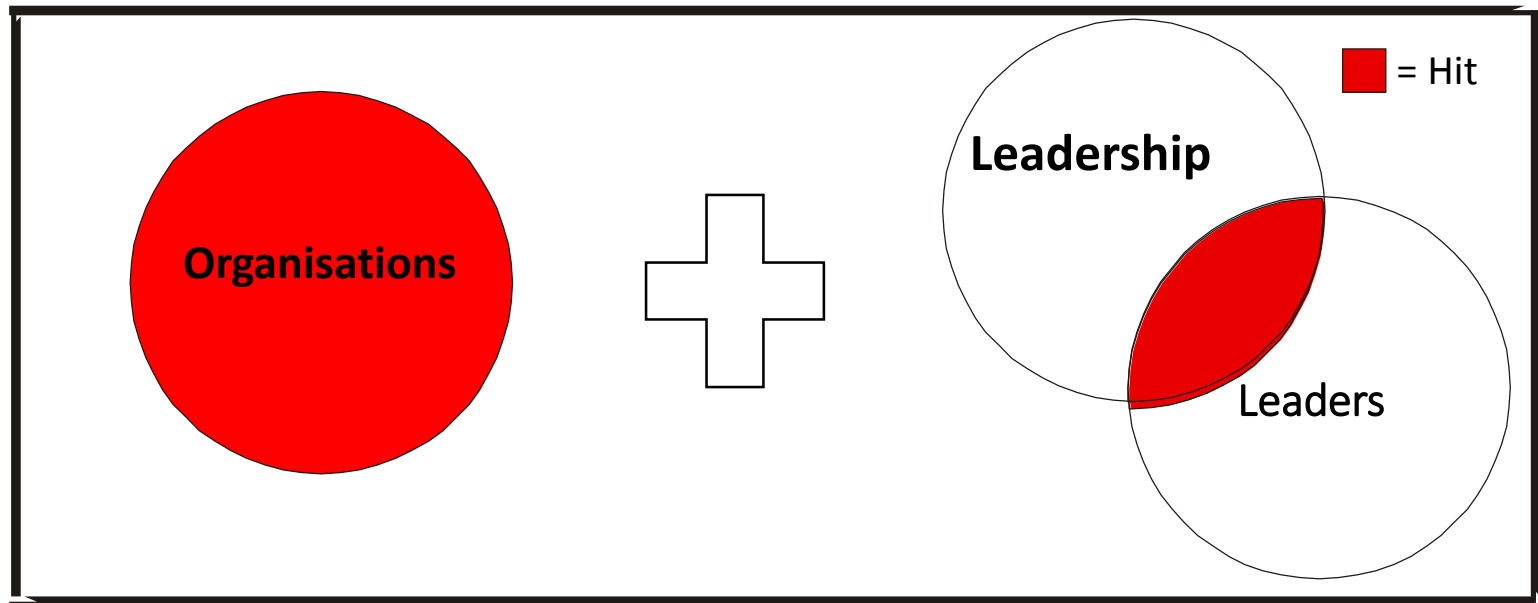
- More than one word contained in “ ” to search for a specific phrase
  - “artificial intelligence”
  - Searches for the phrase in the exact order and
  - proximity

# Brackets

- Useful to combine search phrases into one using brackets
  - Using the topic “Leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations” the searches can be
    - Leadership AND organisation
    - Leaders AND organisations
  - (leadership OR leaders) AND organisations

# Brackets

- Brackets avoid ambiguity:
  - leadership OR leaders AND organisations
    - It will not include ... in the search



# Truncation / Stemming

- Truncation involves the shortening of the word (\*) to allow the inclusion of plurals and similar phrases
  - Eg. Lit\* for literature BUT
- lit\* - **l**iteratures, **l**iterature

BUT ALSO **l**ittleness, **l**itigation, **l**ithography

Best truncation would be  
**literature\***

# Wildcards

- If you are looking for a word that has a plural in the word, you can use a wildcard
  - Usually designated by “?”
- Eg. searching for articles on woman and women in general
  - You would use **wom?n** instead and it would bring results back with both woman and women in it.

# Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Sources **do not clearly relate** to the research problem;
- **Lack of defining and identifying** the most relevant sources related to the research problem;
- Relying exclusively on **secondary analytical sources**;
- **Uncritically accepting** another researcher's findings and interpretations
- Reporting **isolated statistical** results rather than synthesizing them; and,
- Only including research that **validates assumptions**

# Summary

- Demonstrates a **familiarity** with a body of knowledge and establishes the credibility of your work;
- Summarises **prior research** and says how your project is linked to it;
- **Integrates and summarises** what is known about a subject;
- Demonstrates that **you have learnt from others** and that your research is a starting point for new ideas.



# References & Tools

- Lawrence A. M. & Brenda T. M. 2009. *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Curtin University Library – The Literature Review:  
<http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/c.php?g=202406&p=1332621>
- Queens Margaret University - Writing a Literature Review :  
<http://archive.qmu.ac.uk/els/docs/writing%20a%20literature%20review.pdf>
- Academic Literacy Workshop (compiled by Ellen Hurst) -  
<https://vula.uct.ac.za/access/content/user/01407397/Academic%20literacy%20workshop/Academic%20Literacy%202012%20-%20Final%20Edition.pdf>
- Literature Review Matrix Table (templates & examples):  
<https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/assignments/literaturereview/organization>



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