

Search Strategy Journal

Information Literacy GEO this assignment addresses: Develops an effective search strategy. Though students are required to do college level research, they often lack the skills necessary to articulate their research needs and to locate and access information.

Objectives of assignment:

- The students will be able to generate search terms.
- The students will be able to effectively use Boolean Operators.
- The students will be able to select the appropriate resource for their research needs.
- The students will understand that researching is a process, which involves analysis and modification.
- The students will reflect on their search strategies thereby improving the effectiveness of their searches.

Preparation: To prepare the students for this assignment, the instructor should introduce the students to the concept of creating a “search strategy.” Concepts that can be covered are finding Search Terms (keywords, synonyms, subject headings), using Boolean Operators (And, Or, Not), and choosing a resource appropriate to the topic or discipline. As the students are being instructed in effective searching, the instructor should demonstrate some searches in a catalog and/or database, making sure the class contributes to the process. The students should be prepared to keep a Search Strategy Journal after this brief introduction.

Assignment: Search Strategy Journal

1. After the instructor has introduced the students to the concept of creating a search strategy, the instructor should distribute the assignment to the class.
2. The Search Strategy Journal would probably work best if assigned in conjunction with a research paper or project.
3. The students should not write their answers on the assignment sheet. If handwriting their response, they should use paper with margins. If typing their responses, they should create a margin in Page Set-up. The margins will allow the student and the instructor to comment and reflect on the entries.
4. Each question requires at minimum a one paragraph response. Some instructors might find it useful to impose a time limit for each question to elicit more elaborated responses. For instance, the instructor could require that students write for at least fifteen minutes on each question.

5. This assignment stresses process over polish. Tell the students that they will not be graded on grammar, spelling, etc. Tell the students that the journal is a great place to reconsider strategies, reevaluate choices, ask questions, note research successes, and acknowledge any confusion encountered during the process.
6. Finally, collect the journals, comment on them in the margins, and then return them. Alternatively, you could have the students use them to contribute to a discussion/recap of effective research strategies. Require students to make one comment each in class based on something that they wrote in their Search Strategy Journals.

Important summation/review points: After the students have finished writing the journal, have them bring their journals and any questions that arose during the research process to class. Using their entries or questions, the instructor can review and reinforce concepts taught before the research process began, such as Search Terms, Boolean Operators, or resource selection.