Literature searching

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Develop a search strategy

1. Break the topic down
2. Identify the key concepts
3. Identify alternate terms
Synonyms for each key concept can help you refine your search strategy:

• Multiple meanings (‘icon’)
• Geographical variation (‘lift’/‘elevator’)
• Historical context (‘EU’/‘EEC’)
• Technical terms (thesaurus/subject terms)
• Opposing concepts (‘privacy’/‘surveillance’)

Why identify alternate search terms?
Search strategy tips

Truncation and Wildcards
Boolean Operators
Proximity Operators
Parenthesis
Phrase searching
Fuzzy search
Truncation and wildcards:

behav*  behave, behaves, behaving, behavior, behaviour etc.
wom?n  woman and women
colo$r  color and colour

*$#$!??
Phrase searching:

Morecambe and Wise

“...is it wise to spend a weekend in Morecambe?”

"Morecambe and Wise"

“...the sketch comedy of Morecambe and Wise.”
Our **Skills Guides** are the place to go for videos, interactive tutorials, workbooks, and links to specific help for developing your digital and information searching skills.
Break down your research question

Planning your search can help you find everything you need. Identify which terms are necessary to include in your search, and consider different ways in which those concepts could be expressed...

Breaking down your search:
Keywords and synonyms (tutorial)

Think about what you’re searching

How you go about your search will depend on where it is you’re searching.

Most academic resources will not include the full text of an article, so your search terms will need to match against things like the title, author names, abstract summary, and any keywords that have been added by the cataloguers.

Look at your search results to see what your search terms have been matched against. The search results may suggest other terms to try.

Using operators

Most databases allow you to enter elaborate controlled searches using special words and characters ("operators")...

- Combining search terms: Boolean operators - AND, OR and NOT (tutorial)
- Combining search terms: "Phrase Searching" (and Parenthesis) (tutorial)
- Combining search terms: Proximity operators (tutorial)
- Plurals and variations in spelling: Truncation and wildcards (tutorial)

Information for researchers:
Create a search strategy

Forthcoming training sessions

Forthcoming sessions on Search skills:

Academic Googling: opening up the search box

Subject headings

Some databases will let you search directly against standardised...
Activity 1: Plan

1. Make a note or the key terms and phrases for your search topic

2. Identify synonyms and alternate phrases

3. Discuss with the person sitting next to you and provide them with some constructive feedback
Where to start?
As a Philosophy student, you are expected to use high quality literature. You'll need to use a range of different sources and demonstrate your ability to find good results in order to impress your tutors and to develop your research skills.

**Books**

Philosophy books are located in the A section on the second floor of the JB Morrell Library. Many books will also be available online as e-books. Look for the links in YorSearch, under the View It section of each book.

[Click to reveal a list of common shelf locations for Philosophy](#)

**Key Texts Collection**

Books which are essential course reading are held in the Key Texts Collection on the ground floor. You can borrow a Key Texts item for up to 4 hours during the day, or overnight from 18:00 until the following day.

**Search skills**

- **Digital Skills Guide: Search Skills**
  - How to search effectively

- **How to search effectively**
  - Keywords and synonyms (tutorial)
  - Boolean operators: AND, OR and NOT (tutorial)
  - Plurals and variations in spelling: Truncation and wildcards (tutorial)

**Using YorSearch**

YorSearch is the place to look for books, journals, and other materials held by the Library.

[YorSearch](#)

Get to grips with YorSearch (click to reveal)

**Key electronic resources**

- Philosopher’s Index (EBSCO)
- PhilPapers

**Online reference works**

Starting from the homepage of one of the Library’s e-book collections, you can search the full text of all the books in that collection. This can help you find relevant reading even if your chosen subject is not the main theme of the publication.

- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Oxford Bibliographies Online: Philosophy
- Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Oxford Reference Online: Premium Collection
- Oxford Scholarship Online: Philosophy

**Skills Guides**

- **Skills Guide: Searching for information**
  - Search for & evaluate different sources

**Evaluate what you’ve found**

- Skills Guide: Evaluating information
Reference sources

- Most aren’t freely available
- Written by academics
- Stanford Encyclopedia is a key resource (and it is freely available online)
Welcome to PhilPapers

PhilPapers is a comprehensive index and bibliography of philosophy maintained by the community of philosophers. We monitor all sources of research content in philosophy, including journals, books, open access archives, and personal pages maintained by academics. We also host the largest open access archive in philosophy. Our index currently contains 2,299,630 entries categorized in 5,282 categories. PhilPapers has over 200,000 registered users.

Take a tour of PhilPapers

Browse by topic

Metaphysics and Epistemology (343,607)
  Epistemology (35,363)
  Metaphilosophy (5,289)
  Metaphysics (40,620)
  Philosophy of Action (23,580)
  Philosophy of Language (45,285)
  Philosophy of Mind (92,071)
  Philosophy of Religion (91,852)
  M&E. Misc (177)

Value Theory (545,533)
Activity 2: Search

1. Search PhilPapers

2. Apply some of the different search techniques

3. Explore some of the different search functions

4. If you have time sign up for an account
Tip – save your searches
Tip – try out citation searching

“Citation indexing can improve scientific communication by revealing relationships between articles, drawing attention to important corrections or retractions of published work, identifying significant improvements or criticisms of earlier work, and helping limit the wasteful duplication of prior research.”

Getting hold of items we don’t have in our collections
1) Visit other university libraries

2) Free mini bus to Boston Spa

3) Request items via the Interlending Service
Reference management software

References and managing information

Paperpile

THOMSON REUTERS ENDNOTE
• Collect...
• Manage...
• Cite...

EndNote Online

OR

Paperpil

Sources

Citations

Reference list

Reading lists
Annotated bibliographies

s

scholar

EndNote

Online

OR

Paperpil

Sources

Citations

Reference list

Reading lists
Annotated bibliographies
Keeping track of your searches

Some databases will let you save your searches for future reference. You may need to create an account with the database provider to do this. It may even be possible to set up alerts and receive a notification when new items are added which match your search.

If you can't save your searches in this way, you should still try to keep some record of your searches should you need to recreate them.

Reference management software

Managing what you find can be difficult, especially if you're working on a big piece of work that relies on a lot of references. Reference management software lets you keep track of what you've found: you can group and organise your references, keep notes, and store PDFs online for easy access. You can even automatically cite your references as you write up your work. Use the tabs below to find out more.

How it works

- Paperpile
- EndNote
- Other programs

Collect

Manage

Cite

EndNote Online

EndNote Online has styles for the University of York versions of Chicago, Harvard (including the Archaeology and Environment versions), MLA and Vancouver, plus trial versions of IEEE and Oscola, along with an Annotated Notes style for creating annotated reading lists. These styles are prefixed UoY.

If you can't see the styles in EndNote Online, see the advice on our Obtaining the software page.

Forthcoming training sessions

Forthcoming sessions: Reference management:

Where did I read that thing?: Reference management
22 November, 14:00-16:00, D/N/114

There's more training events at:

Skills Guide: Training
Take a look at our list of events

In academic writing it is important to support your arguments with appropriate references.

You should familiarise yourself with your department's chosen referencing style.

The University uses the following styles:

- Click to reveal the list of styles

Referencing styles
The Writing Centre

Located in LFA/102 on the first floor of the Harry Fairhurst Building, the Writing Centre is a free service open to all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students interested in discussing and developing their academic writing.

We offer one-to-one drop-ins (20–30 minutes) and appointments (30 minutes and 50 minutes) during which we help you work on aspects of academic writing such as:

- planning your assignment
- structuring your assignment
- developing your argument
- integrating sources into your writing
- expressing yourself clearly and accurately

We do not offer:

- a proof-reading or correction service.
Useful links

Philosophy Subject Guide

The Writing Centre website

Skills Guide

Information about accessing other libraries & Interlending