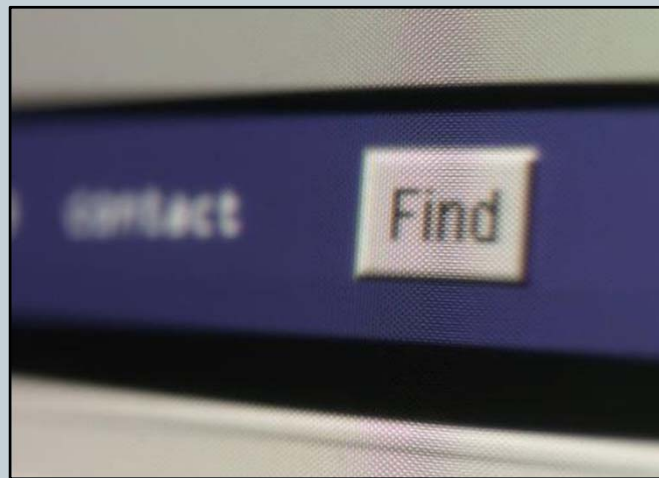# Middle Temple Library

EFFECTIVE ONLINE RESEARCH

Effective Research

- Structuring research saves time:
  - ✓ Eliminates irrelevant sources
  - ✓ Avoids duplication of work
  - ✓ Produces relevant results
  - ✓ Makes future research quicker

- Take notes at each stage of your research
- If you are struggling to find the right information:
  - ○ Consider new search strategies
  - ○ Seek assistance
    - ✕ See final slide for Library contact information

Structuring Research

Identify Questions

Put your questions into research terms

Choose relevant finding tools & sources

Undertake research

- What do you need to know?

- Identify: subjects, keywords, search terms, related areas

- Consider: authority, subject, format, jurisdiction, cost availability

- Make notes as you work

Reviewing Research

Did you answer every question?

Identify any missing information

Did you find information that creates new questions?
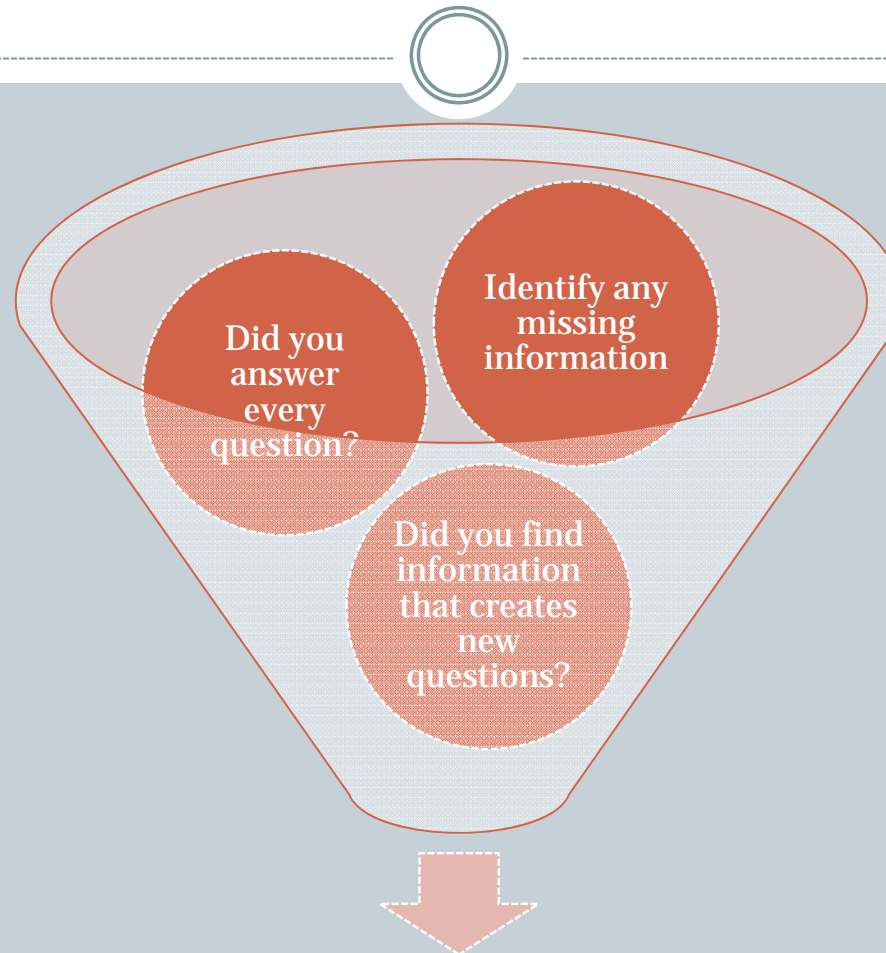
Revise search terms, consider other sources & continue research if necessary.

Boolean Logic

AND	**OR**	**NOT**
results contain both terms	results contain either term	discards results that contain the second term

- Databases may replace Boolean terms with symbols or use different search operators
  - Many databases read a **space** between words as **AND**
  - Westlaw uses **%** for **NOT**
  - Google uses **–** for **NOT**
  - HeinOnline requires Boolean operators to be in **ALL CAPS**
  - Lexis uses **ATLEAST** followed by a **number** to indicate how many times a word will appear in each document

Try It

- Search the BAILII database for:

    dangerous AND animals

- Then search for:

    dangerous AND animals NOT dogs

- What is the difference in the results?

    - The second search should produce significantly fewer results, by removing any that refer to dogs.

Phrase Searching

Quotation Marks " "

- Searches for words as a phrase
- Words appear next to each other exactly as typed
- Useful when searching for a phrase containing a Boolean operator

Round Brackets ( )

- Structures the order keywords are searched
- Personal or professional negligence ≠ (personal or professional) negligence
  - The first searches 'personal' and then 'professional negligence'
  - The second searches 'personal negligence' and then 'professional negligence'

Try It

- Search the BAILII database for:

    trick or treat

- Then search for:

    "trick or treat"

- What is the difference in the results?
  - The first search finds any results that have the word 'trick' or the word 'treat'.
  - The second finds far fewer results, since it finds only those with the phrase 'trick or treat'.

Truncation

$
- Middle Temple Library catalogue

!
- Lexis
- Westlaw
- Westlaw US

*
- BAILII
- EUR Lex
- Google
- Hein Online
- HUDOC
- JustCite & Justis
- Lawtel

- Search variations of a word by using a truncation (or root expander) symbol
  - For example: sentenc$ = sentence, sentences, sentencer, sentencing, etc.

- The truncation symbol varies across databases

Advanced Searching

- Search for information in the correct field
- Narrow down or sort results to limit to relevant results
- Use advanced search options for more specific results
- Remember: databases offer a range of options for building complex searches
  - See database details for specific search terms and symbols

Try It

- Search the BAILII database for:
   millennium

- Then find the Advanced Search screen and search for:
   millennium with a date range from **1999** to **2000**

- What is the difference in the results?
   - The second search produces far fewer results, with cases only from the selected years.

Field Searching Video
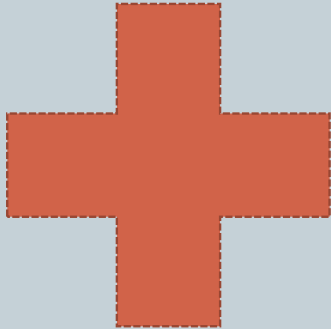
Search Engines

More than just Google
- Duckduckgo does not track your activity

Google advanced search: www.google.com/advanced_search

More productive than some website's internal search engines
- Site/domain limiter searches only specific types of website
  - For example: parliament.uk

Not a replacement for databases!

You must evaluate all sources:
- ✓ Notice the design and look
  - Are official logos or references accurate?
- ✓ Is the site up-to-date?
- ✓ Consider who produced the information
  - Is the writer biased? Is the research thorough?
- ✓ Note the ending of the web address
 - For example: .ac.uk, .edu, .eu, .gov, .org, etc.

Try It

- Search Google Advanced Search for a copy of:

  "Montreal Protocol" No. 4 1975, hosted directly by the UN (un.org)

- How does this compare to searching the UN Treaty Collection database directly?

- *Note:* Google only recognises certain search operators in specific formats
  - Full list of search operators:
  support.google.com/websearch/answer/136861?p=adv_operators&hl=en

Synonyms

- Search for synonyms or related terms to produce more results

- Different databases use different keywords & subject headings

- View the subject hierarchy to choose more precise or general terms
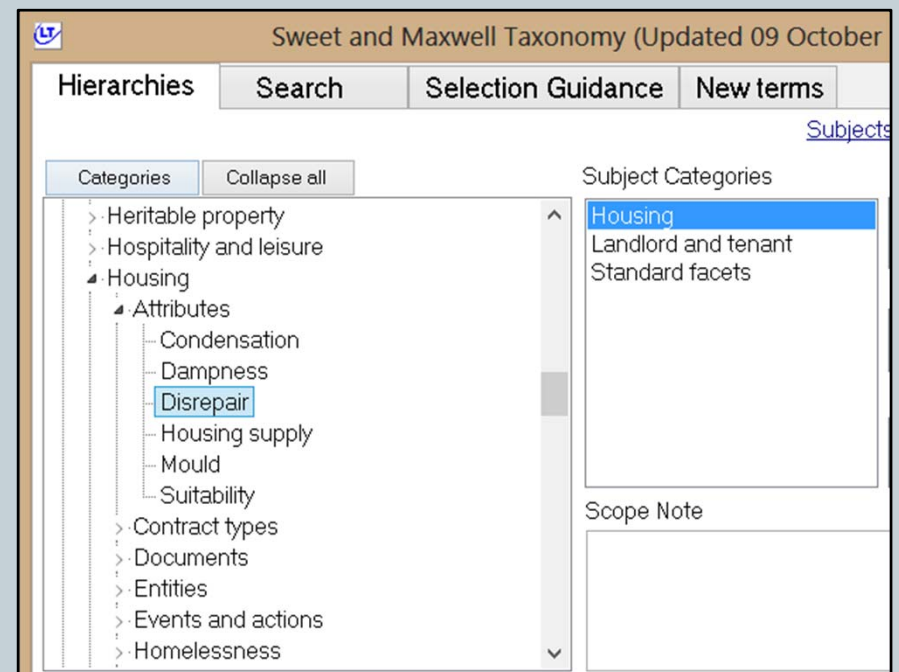
Sweet & Maxwell's subject hierarchy shows how keywords fit together

Spelling & Context

- Search under alternate spellings of words
  - Especially important in American and historical databases
  - Use symbols to replace letters as necessary, use the 'or' operator, or run multiple searches

- Secondary context for a term may produce unrelated results
  - For example: 'caution' produces results related to both the police and land register

Middle Temple Library

Further questions? Need more training or advice?

Contact the Library at:

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www.middletemplelibrary.org.uk