# Developing and Executing a Search Strategy

1. **Compose your Research or Clinical Question**
   - Use PICOS worksheet (patient group or problem, intervention, comparison, outcome, setting); or PICOT if time is an important factor.

2. **Identify Relevant Databases to Search**
   - CINAHL, PubMed, Cochrane Databases or The Digital Pipeline (Formerly Databases for Alaskans).

3. **Define Your Search Strategy**
   - Break the question into concepts or elements that can be searched separately and later combined.

4. **Use the Appropriate Thesaurus or Controlled Subject Terms if Available**
   - For example in PubMed, use MeSH (Medical Subject Headings).

5. **Consider Searching for Appropriate Synonyms and Text Words For Better Focus**
   - Use these to search in non-indexed fields like the title and abstract fields. Use truncation, when appropriate.

6. **Determine Boolean Operators**
   - Use AND to retrieve records which contain both terms; use OR to retrieve records which contain either term; and use NOT to eliminate records with unwanted terms.

7. **Apply Limit(s)**
   - Limit to certain languages, age groups or publication types (peer-reviewed journals).

8. **Run the Search and Critically Appraise the Results**
   - Refine search if necessary, revisiting steps 4-7 according to your results.

9. **Revise the Strategy if Necessary and Run the Search Again**
   - Consult a librarian if you need assistance. Call (907) 786-1870 or 1 888-997-7878 in AK.

10. **Print, Save or E-mail Result List for Your Records or Order Full Text from HSIS**
    - Use Order option in citation manager (CINAHL), Loansome Doc (PubMed), online forms on AML home page, fax print-out to 786-1608 or e-mail to aml@uaa.alaska.edu. If information is needed fast for a clinical emergency, also alert AML at 786-1870 or 1 888-997-7878.

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