Keyword Searching with Boolean Operators

A very important aspect of crafting an effective search strategy is your choice of terms. Use this worksheet to brainstorm on main terms, synonyms, and related words.

Write down your research question here:

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

Next, for each key concept in your topic, list one or more terms that may be useful in a search: (Be sure to try to think of synonyms and related terms)

(Key concept #1) _________________ or _________________ or _________________

and

(Key concept #2) _________________ or _________________ or _________________

and

(Key concept #3) _________________ or _________________ or _________________

You may have more or less than 3 main concepts. Use “and” between concepts. Use “or” between synonyms/related words.

Truncation:
When you notice a family of words developing within a concept row, you may truncate to the common root word to allow for ease of searching. For example:

comprehend, comprehending, comprehension → comprehen* 

language or languages → language*

Turn over this sheet to see an example of how a search can be entered within a database.

Sample Research Question:

What are the most effective ways of improve reading comprehension in the French classroom?

reading 

and

comprehen*

and

French or foreign language* or second language* or L2
Note you can add rows to your search in EBSCO databases. Some databases will have fewer rows available. In the case of only one search box, put parentheses around your or phrases, Ex:

reading and comprehen* and (French or foreign language*)

You may select more than one EBSCO database here and search them simultaneously.

The drop boxes allow you to choose and, or or not. It defaults to and.