SEARCH PLAN
Searching for reliable information effectively requires a structured approach.

1. Research Question

- Describe your topic as a research question (a complex question requires sub-questions). Take your time to formulate this: a well-defined search question makes your search for information more efficient.
  ➔ **Tip:** Use a logbook Desk research simple query or Desk research extended query
- Refine your subject in advance, use limitations such as:
  - Specific period in history
  - language, specific area/country
  - perspective /approach
- What type of information sources do you need: general, current or in-depth?
  - general information: for instance handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias
  - current information: for instance specialist journals, newspapers, websites, statistics
  - in-depth information: for instance books, (scholarly/scientific) journals, statistics, reports

More information: **LibGuide Research Question**

2. Search terms

- Decide on the search terms for your search question.
- Brainstorm for each term: synonyms, related terms, other language, different ways to spell a term, singular/plural
- Consult reference works: (online) encyclopedia, Wikipedia , Encyclopedia Britannica , dictionary (Online Van Dale), handbook
- Use key words and abstracts from your previously found search results
- Which authors and/or organizations are authorities in the field of your topic?

More information: **LibGuide Research question - Search terms**

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3. Information sources

It is important to choose the most suitable sources for your research
Use as tool : LibGuides per discipline

- **Databases** bibliotheek.zuyd.nl, A-Z list databases and Zuyd Library search engine DiZ
  ➔ **Tip:** Use more than one database and several search engines to obtain information from different sources.
- **(E)Books**: Zuyd Library Search Engine DiZ, Zuyd Library Catalogue, Worldcat, Google Books, E-journals & E-books
- **Articles**: Zuyd Library Search Engine DiZ, Google Scholar, A-Z list databases, E-journals & E-books
  ➔ **Tip**: Adjust the settings of Google Scholar, add FullText@Zuyd to your Library links.
- **Sheet Music**: Zuyd Library Search Engine DiZ, Zuyd Library Catalogue, Worldcat
- **Internet**: Google Scholar, Google (advanced search), websites

More information: **LibGuide Searching and finding**

4. Searching

- Start searching generally, then more targeted.
- Combine search terms by using Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT)
- Use quotation marks to search for a whole phrase or a specific word combination.
  (for instance: “higher education”)
- Use specific search fields (key words, title, author)
- Use the literature you have found to select new search terms and new sources.

➔ **Search tip**:

Too many search results:
- Specify your search by using more search terms (AND)
- Use quotation marks ("…") to find specific word combinations
- Use specific search fields (title, key word)
- Define limitations such as publication date
- NOT (in Google: - minus sign) to exclude search terms

Too few search results:
- Use synonyms (use OR to combine)
- Look up official terms (dictionary, thesaurus, handbook, encyclopedia)
- Truncation (e.g. in catalogue): psycholo* searches for psychologist, psychology, psychologists, etc.
- Use references from publications which you have already found
- Use "cited by" (e.g. in Google Scholar)

More information: **LibGuide Searching and finding**

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5. Selecting information

Use only relevant and reliable information.
- Relevance: the extent to which the information contributes to answering the research question.
- Reliability: the extent to which you can be confident that the information is correct

Assessing information, what is important:
Authority: who is the author (an official organization/a person), what is his/her background, can you verify this?
Topicality: is the information up-to-date, how do you know?
Objectivity: what is the purpose of the information, is there a particular point of view, does this influence the content, is the author open about this, is it acceptable, are there sponsors or advertorials, how detailed is the information?
Accuracy: is the information correct, can you check this, is a reference list available?
Websites: what does the url tell you? (e.g.: gov= government, edu=education, com= commercial/business, org=non-profit)

More information: **LibGuide Assessing and selecting**

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6. Processing information

- Avoid plagiarism: use in-text citations + reference list
- Citing and reference list according to APA-style (Note: some Zuyd departments use other reference styles, e.g. Vancouver!)
- EndNote is a software program that enables you to store and manage your information and generates a reference list automatically.

Note-taking
You need to name your sources in your reports and other assignments. Keep good notes of your sources, a valuable skill for citing and recalling your sources.
Take notes on:
- Source + previously used search terms
- Data of publications, e.g.:
  - Book: title, publication date and author
  - Additional information for articles: journal title, volume, issue, page numbers
- Information about availability: online, library, shelf mark

More information: **LibGuide Processing and evaluation**