Creating your own search strategy

In [identifying evidence](#), we outline how to form a well-structured search question using PICO to ensure a successful and relevant search. The PICO structure helps to define the individual concepts of your search that, when combined, create you search strategy. Using the PICO example and research question discussed previously we can begin to build our search strategy.

> **P**: Patients on long flights
>
> **I**: Compression stockings
>
> **C**: No compression stockings
>
> **O**: Prevention of deep vein thrombosis

Research question - *In patients on long flights, do compression stockings prevent deep vein thrombosis?*

	Primary term		**Synonym 1**		
P	(*flight**	**OR**	-	)	**AND**
I	(*stocking**	**OR**	-	)	**AND**
C	(-	**OR**	-	)	**AND**
O	(*DVT*	**OR**	*thrombosis*		

To improve the effectiveness of your search it is possible to use a range of commands:

The **truncation symbol** (*) allows you to search for different root word endings. For example, **child*** will find child, children and childhood.

The **wildcard symbol** (?) replaces a single letter within or at the end of a word, allowing you to search for spelling variations. For example, **organi?ation** will find both organisation and organization.

Each electronic resource will advise you of their truncation and wildcard symbols in the online help.

As the table above shows, the individual search terms are combined within each concept using brackets and the Boolean operator 'OR', for example (DVT OR thrombosis). To complete the strategy and identify evidence relevant to your research questions, you can join the individual concepts using 'AND'. Thus, the complete search strategy would look like this if written out:

> flight* AND stocking* AND (DVT OR thrombosis)

Performing your search

To start, we recommend that you register for an NHS Evidence OpenAthens account. This gives you secure and simple access to thousands of electronic journals and online resources free of charge.

- [Register for an OpenAthens account](#)

Having identified your PICO terms and opened your OpenAthens account, you are ready to perform your search. There is a bewildering choice of information databases available online depending on your area of interest, but we recommend you start with:

- [NHS Evidence](#) - free open access to a unique index of selected and authoritative health and social care evidence-based information.
- [NHS National Institute for Health Research Database](#) / [Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) – University of York](#)
- [The King's Fund](#) - holds over 100,000 latest healthcare policy and management publications.
- [The Cochrane Library](#) six databases (including Database of Reviews of Effectiveness (DARE), NHS Economic Evaluation Database (EDD) and Health Technology Assessments (HTA) that contain high-quality, independent evidence to inform healthcare decision-making.