**Session 3 – Introduction to research methods (and what can I do from my desk?) INDEPENDENT WORK**

1. Watch the LifeLab video – ‘Desk research’.
2. Recap on the top tips you have heard in session 3 about searching effectively on the internet or on databases – see page 2.
3. Read through the information on page 3 on how to make the most of your desk research.
4. Write out your own list of keywords and phrases, using \* and ? and “ “ and the Boolean operators.
5. Spend at least an hour finding as much information as possible, completing the table on the separate worksheet, or noting down information in whatever format you will find useful.
6. Complete an entry in your production log.

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**Top tips for searching effectively on the internet or on databases**

Stage 1 - have your research question ready, so you know what you want to find out.​

Stage 2 - break down your question or topic into keywords.​ For example, with the question “How does smoking affect your chance of developing cancer?”, they would be …​ “smoking” “cancer” “affect”

Stage 3 – use these codes you help get even more detailed results:​ ​

* Truncation: Words with similar meanings and the same beginning can be searched for all at the same time. For example, instead of writing teen, teens, teenage, teenager, teenagers, you can use an asterisk and change it to teen\* ​
* Wild card: Spellings vary from one country to another, with words being very similar but not completely the same. The word ‘tumour’ in British English is spelled ‘tumor’ in American English. Use a question mark to solve this when you search, so you would write ‘tumo?r’​
* Phrases: Use ”” around keywords that are more than one word e.g. ”Climate change” ​
* Boolean operators: Use ‘AND’ to search a term alongside another, and ‘OR’ to search a term in comparison with another e.g., “smoking AND teen\*” or “youngster OR teen\*”​

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**How to make the most of your desk research**

**a) Reliability of your sources – remember that some websites and sources are more reliable than others!**

Only use sources that are transparent, responsible and reliable. Those likely to be more reliable are:

* Papers published in academic / scientific journals – these have been reviewed by other academics or scientists who work in the same area of research, and before publication, they need to agree that it is reliable research.
* Well-known news outlets such as the BBC – they are publicly funded and have a duty to check their facts before publishing stories.
* Other news outlets may be reliable if they give a source for their information
* The Gov.uk website is official information from the UK Government.

However, be wary of some sources of information and always try to double check, finding different sources for the same information:

* Be careful with Wikipedia!
* Watch out for biases eg if a website is funded by an oil or gas company, can it be trusted to give accurate information about climate change? If research is funded by a tobacco company, can it be trusted to be unbiased about the effects of smoking?

**b) When you have found an interesting web page, article, academic paper or news item, what do you do?**

* Read the summary if there is one – or skim through the article or page.
* If it looks relevant, read the introduction and conclusion, or read the article or page more thoroughly.
* Decide if it is important to your research question and whether the information is from a reliable source.
* Make note of the most important details, and write down the source of that information to keep track of everything you may use.
* You always need to give credit to the people who wrote the articles, web pages or academic papers that you use.
* If you use someone else's work without their permission or without giving them credit, it is called plagiarism.

**Now it’s over to you … use the Desk Research DIY worksheet to help you organise your notes, or choose a way that suits you!**rt title]