



THE ECVAM SEARCH GUIDE

CHECK LIST for Searching Information on Alternative Methods

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The 3Rs search procedure checklist is designed to:

- put into practice the principles set out elsewhere in the Search Guide as “The Seven Golden Steps to Successful Searching”,
- obtain information of the quality required to both consider relevant alternatives, and justify any necessary animal use.

Using the 3Rs search procedure checklist enables scientists to construct **systematic and efficient searches**.

It includes items that are specific for searching information on alternative methods.

STEP 1. INFORMATION NEED

- Clearly define your specific information need:

STEP 2. COMPONENTS OF YOUR APPROACH

- Identify the fundamental components of your scientific approach.
- a. Field of investigation:
 - b. Specific objective(s):
 - c. Methods/Models:

STEP 3. APPROPRIATE INFORMATION RESOURCES

- Define the most appropriate information resources.
- a. Value-added:
 - b. Limitable (to a 3Rs-subset of documents) broad coverage: indicate what limitations you plan to use (e.g. MeSH-term-based: *animal use alternatives*).
 - c. Unlimited broad coverage.

STEP 4. RELEVANT SEARCH TERMS

- Compile the search terms that best describe your scientific objectives and approach, and need for 3Rs information.

Select terms with appropriate levels of specificity/breadth.
Consider thesaurus terms, and advanced queries.

a. Field of investigation:

b. Objective(s):

c. Methods/Models:

STEP 5 START YOUR SEARCH WITH A SIMPLE QUERY IN A 3Rs SPECIFIC CONTEXT

- Start your search in value-added 3Rs sources, trying out different search terms within a simple query, and browsing through the inventory (classification scheme) if available.

- Evaluate the documents retrieved.

Is there information on alternative method(s) that are suitable to reach the scientific purpose of your approach, are there potentially better search terms?

STEP 6 LIMIT SEARCH RESULTS FROM MORE EXTENSIVE RESOURCES

- If no information on suitable alternatives is found using the value-added sources, continue your search using limitable broad coverage sources.

- Try different kinds of 3Rs-relevant limitations (e.g. MeSH-term-based, journal-based etc) to limit the results to relevant and manageable lists of documents. Evaluate the results and consider if it is possible to improve your query by adding varying search terms and Boolean operators.

- Evaluate the most relevant documents retrieved.

STEP 7 BROADEN THE SEARCH HORIZON

- If no suitable alternative was retrieved by restricting the search by predetermined 3Rs-relevant limitations, repeat step 5 in broader coverage resources with more general limitations consistent with your scientific methodology and objectives.

- Evaluate the documents retrieved.

