Searching Techniques

When searching online or in an academic database, you will be asked to enter terms into a search field. Creating an effective search can take some practice, but here are some basic searching tips that may help you find what you need.

1. Include Boolean Terms

Three basic terms, AND, OR, and NOT, can make your search more effective. These are sometimes referred to as ‘Boolean terms,’ referring to a searching method entitled ‘Boolean Searching.’

**AND**

Connect search terms/keywords with AND if you need search results with both terms.

Example: if searching for Elementary School, use Elementary AND School

![AND Diagram]

**OR**

Connect search terms/keywords with OR if you need to conduct a broader search.

The OR connector works great with common synonyms.

Example: if searching for Exercising, you might use Exercise OR Run OR Swim

![OR Diagram]

Last updated: April 2010
2. Use Truncation, Parentheses and Quotations to broaden or narrow your search.

**Truncation and Wildcards**

You can use symbols such as * or ? to broaden your search.

- Use ? as a **wildcard** — use it as a replacement for any letter in a word.
  
  Example: m?n will find results for men and man

- Use * as a **truncation symbol** — use it as a replacement for the end of a term.
  
  Example: teach* will find results for teaching and teacher

**Parentheses**

Boolean terms are handled in a specific order: first NOT, then AND and finally OR. To change this order, use parentheses, just like in algebra:

(bird OR hawk) AND Texas

(cat AND dog) NOT pet

**Quotations**

Grouping search terms within quotation marks will search the terms as a phrase.

Example: “researching dyslexia” will find results only with that exact phrase.

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