

How to SEARCH ELECTRONIC RESOURCES: Some Tips

These tips/techniques apply to most, but not all, databases. Always click on the **HELP** option for details and other techniques for the database you are using.

SEARCH STRATEGY

- First, break down your topic into separate components
- Then, identify possible subject headings, keywords, and synonyms
- Next, use one or more of the following techniques to formulate a search statement

TRUNCATION and WILDCARDS

***** Use * for unlimited truncation of a word root in most Internet search engines and library databases.
example: **comput*** = **computation, compute, computerization, etc.**
Be careful not to truncate too soon. example: **mar*** = *marriage, marital, marijuana, marsupial, etc*

Wildcards Use ? as a wildcard to substitute one character in several database systems.
examples: **wom?n** = **women, woman; fib??** = **fiber, fibre**
Some databases may use # or !. Check the HELP options.

BOOLEAN OPERATORS

AND Use **AND** between search words to narrow a search to include records with both terms included.
example: **women and internet**

OR Use **OR** between search words to broaden a search to include records with either one, or the other, or both terms.
example: **linguistics or language**

NOT Use **NOT** between search words to narrow a search by excluding a term. Use with caution!
example: **Mexico not New Mexico**

() Use **parentheses** with more than one operator in a statement

example: **(commercials or advertising) and language**

PHRASES

" "	<p>Most databases and search engines allow quotation marks to specify a phrase.</p> <p>examples: "Maya Angelou" "stem cell research" (Note: Beware of using stopwords (e.g., articles, pronouns, prepositions) in a phrase search.)</p> <p>Some databases automatically assume a phrase if you type two words together.</p>
N, W, ADJ	<p>Many systems use proximity operators (N, W, ADJ) for more advanced searching. Use the system-specific HELP options to identify proximity operators.</p>

LIMITERS

In most databases, records contain fields (e.g., author, title, subject, year, etc) that can be searched to limit your results. Also, pay attention to limiters such as fulltext, peer review, publication type, etc. for narrower results.

EDIT/Find (on This Page)

On a Web page with a lot of text (especially when viewing a full-text article), try clicking "EDIT/Find (on This Page)" from the top toolbar to find a keyword within the document.