How to SEARCH ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

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The following tips/techniques apply to most, but not all, research databases. Always click on the HELP option in the database you are using to learn more details and other techniques.

SEARCH STRATEGY:
❖ First, break down your topic into separate components
❖ Then, identify possible 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 research 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. This works in many database systems.

Examples: wom?n = women, woman; fib?? = fiber, fibre

Some databases instead may use # or !. Check the HELP options in the database.

BOOLEAN OPERATORS

AND Use AND between search words to narrow a search to include records with both terms included.

Example: women and technology

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

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Most databases and search engines allow **quotation marks** to specify a phrase. Examples: "Maya Angelou" "stem cell research"
(Note: Beware of using stopwords (e.g., articles, pronouns, prepositions) in a phrase search.)
Some databases automatically assume a phrase if you type two words together.

Many systems use **proximity operators** (**N** for **near**, **W** for **within** a certain number of words, **ADJ** for **adjacent to**) for more advanced searching. Click on the HELP option within the database you are using, to identify such proximity operators.

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 full text, peer reviewed, publication type, etc. for narrower results.

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.

### SUMMARY CHART WITH DATABASE SYSTEM COMPARISONS

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<td>*</td>
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<td>EbscoHost</td>
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<td>FirstSearch</td>
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<td>Thomson Gale</td>
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<td>Ovid</td>
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<td>Web of Science</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>? (one character)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>WilsonWeb</td>
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<td>? (one character)</td>
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<td>Use &quot; &quot; &lt;near/#&gt;</td>
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