

Online Search Techniques

Below are search techniques to help you find relevant results when using the library databases.

Identify Keywords

Create a list of keywords associated with your topic; consider synonyms or variant spellings. Write them down and keep them with you throughout the research process.

Write down your topic: *Does television viewing encourage aggressive behavior in children?*

Write down the important words from your topic: television, aggressive, behavior, children.

Write down synonyms or related words from your list: *television, TV, aggressive, fighting, hostile, angry, behavior, action, attitude, children, kids, tweens, teens, etc.*

Now you have generated a useful list of keywords for finding resources.

Simple search: **television AND aggressive behavior AND children**

Exact Phrase Searching

To look for an exact phrase, type your phrase within **quotation marks** (" "). The results will contain the exact words in the quotation marks.

Example: **"attention deficit disorder"**

Truncation to Expand Your Search

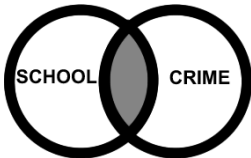
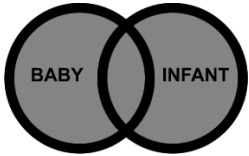
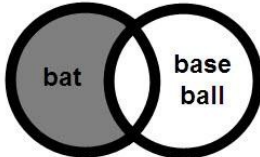
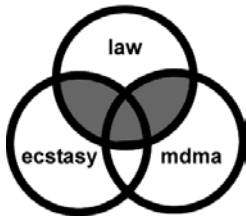
Using an asterisk (*) or question mark (?) at the end of a root word (known as *truncation* or *stemming*), allows you to retrieve results containing any form of the root word.

Example: typing **teen*** will find **teen, teens, teenage, teenager, teenagers**

Note: Most databases, such as *ProQuest* and *JSTOR*, use the asterisk (*) as the truncation symbol. Check the *Help* screen of the database you are using for the truncation symbol.

Boolean Operators to Narrow or Broaden Your Search

Boolean searching is based on connecting keywords with three basic operators: **AND**, **OR** and **NOT**.

AND The database will only retrieve resources that contain both words. This will NARROW your search and DECREASE search results. <i>Example: school AND crime</i>	
OR The database will retrieve resources that contain at least one of these words. This will BROADEN your search and INCREASE search results. <i>Example: baby OR infant</i>	
NOT Type NOT before a keyword to exclude that word from your search. Use NOT when you are searching for a keyword that may have multiple meanings. <i>Example: bat NOT baseball</i>	
Combining Boolean Operators Use parentheses () to keep combination searches in order. In the example below, resources retrieved will contain the word <i>law</i> and at least one of the words in parentheses. <i>Example: law AND (ecstasy OR mdma)</i>	

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