Keyword Search Strategies

Boolean terms

Boolean terms (sometimes called Boolean operators or command terms) connect your keywords to create a logical phrase that the database can understand. This may involve telling the database to look for multiple terms or concepts at once, which will make your search more precise. Or it may involve searching for alternative terms that will bring back more results.

Boolean terms: AND, OR, NOT

Boolean Term	What it Does	How to Use
AND	Find items that use BOTH keywords.	adult learning AND online courses
OR	Find items that use EITHER of the keywords.	adult learners OR adult students
NOT	EXCLUDES items that use the keyword(s).	NOT masters programs

AND

The AND operator:

- connects different concepts
- limits your search
- reduces results

Example:

school leadership AND at risk students AND academic progress

Finds articles that have information about all three of these topics.
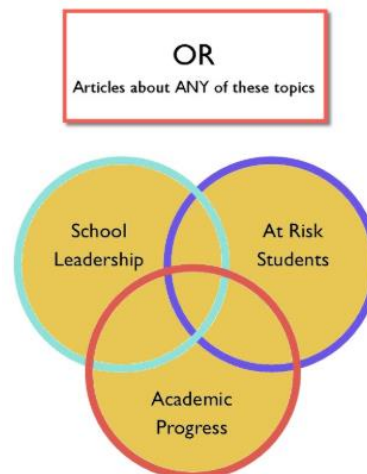

OR

The OR operator:

- finds different ways to phrase a concept
- expands your search
- increases results

Example:

school leadership OR at risk students OR academic progress

NOT

The NOT operator:

- excludes results with the keyword
- reduces results

Example:

school leadership NOT at risk students

Takes out articles with the term used with NOT.

WARNING: Use NOT with caution. It can remove relevant results.

Truncate root words

Truncation allows you to search any ending on a root word.

For example, if your topic uses the word **teenagers**, then you may also want to search:

- **teen**
- **teens**
- **teenager**

The root word is **teen**. To truncate and search teen with any ending you would enter:

teen*

The asterisk at the end of the root word tells the database to search for that word with any ending.

This expands your search to find more articles.

Use Boolean terms

Type in **one concept per search box**.

The advanced search in most databases defaults to automatically **use AND between the search boxes**. Leave the default. The database will find articles that include both concepts.

Use **OR inside the search boxes** to add synonyms or related terms to the search. Because the database will only search for the exact terms entered, using OR helps find the different ways an author may have phrased the concept.

For best results, only **use the OR within a search box**. The AND is placed automatically between the search boxes.

An example search for violence on television using boolean terms might look like this:

First search box: **TV or television or mass media**

Second search box: **violence or aggression**

Use Phrase Searching

Type in key words and enclose them inside quotation marks. The database will return results ONLY with those exact word in that exact order.

Example: "television violence"

You can combine Boolean operators with phrase searching

Example: teenagers AND "television violence"