



## Search Strategies

### Where to search

1. For a general overview, check a **subject specific encyclopedia** or **dictionary**.
2. For more in-depth, extensive information, check out [books](#) from our catalog.
3. For current information on a specific topic, find [articles](#) in print or our online research databases.

### Database search options

#### 1. Boolean Operators: AND, OR, NOT

- **AND** – search for articles that contain all words before and after the AND. For example: type *pollution AND death* to search for articles that include both ‘pollution’ and ‘death’.
- **OR** – search for articles that have either search term before or after the OR. For example: type *football OR soccer* to search articles about either ‘football’ or ‘soccer’.
- **NOT** – eliminate articles that have the term after the NOT. For example: type *surfing NOT Internet* to search articles that include ‘surfing’, but exclude articles with the word, ‘Internet’ (Internet surfing).
- You can combine Boolean operators to limit your search. For example, if you were looking for children’s games, but didn’t want to include computer games, you would type: *(children OR kids) AND games NOT computer*

#### 2. Truncation and Wildcard: \* ?

- **Use truncation to replace letters after the root of your key word.** A quick way to include plurals, tense variations and alternate spellings.  
Example: type *librar\** to find articles that contain library, libraries, librarian and librarians.
- **Use wildcard to replace a single letter in your search.**  
Example: type *wom?n* to find articles that contain woman and/or women.
- Truncation and wildcard symbols vary among databases. Always check the **Help menu!**

#### 3. Phrase Searching: “ ”

- **Use double quotation marks [“ ”] to find articles that contain an exact phrase.** For example: type *“affirmative action”* to find articles for that exact phrase. You’ll get fewer results, and it will exclude articles that don’t contain the phrase in that exact order.

### Database search tips

1. Each research database covers different areas; read the annotations and choose one that relates to your topic. Try different databases or “Find full text” to retrieve more articles for your topic.
2. Use broader terms when searching for books (e.g., “*Anthropology*”); use narrower terms for articles (e.g., *Hmong AND California*.)
3. Limit your search to “Full-text” and/or “scholarly” if you need an expert article right now!
4. Use correct spelling. Computers are literal. They do not associate meaning or see any connection between related items the way humans do.
5. Use synonyms, related terms or alternate spellings to expand your search.
6. Try Advanced Search (combined search) to refine your search for more relevant results.
7. Choose the appropriate field (author, title, subject, abstract, keywords, etc.) for your search terms. Choosing the wrong field may return irrelevant results or none at all.