



USING BOOLEAN TO SEARCH LIBRARY CATALOGS AND ELECTRONIC DATABASES BY KEYWORD

An important feature of online catalogs and electronic databases is *keyword searching*. Keyword searching allows you to search for a single word, a phrase, or a combination of words and phrases.

Examples:

drug abuse

drug abuse **AND** athletes

Boolean logic—a query strategy for searching electronic databases. Boolean searches allow you to combine two or more search terms using the operators “**AND**,” “**OR**,” “**NOT**,” and sometimes “**NEAR**.” **Boolean operators** allow you to expand or restrict your search by specifying the relationship of terms being searched. The parentheses make it possible to group 2 or more search terms into a set, so that the resulting set can then be combined with another search term or set of terms.

◆**AND**—requires all terms appear in each source found in the search results list. Use **AND** to narrow your search.

Narrows

Examples:



Shakespeare **AND** tragedy —finds sources with *both* Shakespeare *and* tragedy anywhere in the same record.

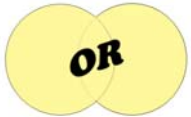
Dallas Cowboys **AND** coaches —finds sources containing both the phrase Dallas Cowboys and the word coaches.

rainforests **AND** Brazil **AND** environment —finds sources that contain all 3 terms: rainforests, Brazil, and information about the environment.

◆**OR**—finds records with either term. Use the Boolean operator **OR** to broaden your search.

Broadens

Examples:



gun* **OR** firearm —finds sources that contains either term.

Dallas Cowboys **OR** Miami Dolphins —finds sources containing either team.

◆**NOT** (Note: The DCCCD Library Catalog and some databases use “**AND NOT**.”)—excludes terms and finds sources when the first term is desired but *not* the second term. Use **NOT** to exclude a word or phrase from your search.

Excludes

Examples:



computers **NOT** software —finds all sources in which the term *computers* appears but *not* any sources in which the term *software* appears.

education **NOT** distance —finds sources about education but *excludes* any sources about distance education.

cowboy* **NOT** football **NOT** Dallas —finds sources on the horse-riding variety of cowboys instead of the football team or players.

Truncation—gives you the ability to enter the first part of a keyword, insert a symbol (usually an *****) and find any variant spellings or word endings. Using a *truncation symbol* allows you to shorten, or truncate, your search term in order to find all words that begin with this root that have different endings.

Examples:

- femini* —finds feminine, feminism, feminist, etc.
- athlet* —finds athlete, athletes, or athletics.
- shake* —finds Shakespeare, Shakespearean, Shakespeare's, Shaker, Shakers, etc.
- theat* —finds theater or theatre (alternative spellings)

Phrase — more than one keyword, searched *exactly as keyed* (all terms required to be in sources, in the order keyed). Sometimes a phrase is called a “character string.” (Note: Some search tools require that phrases be enclosed in quotation marks.)

Examples:

college students financial aid seasonal affective disorder

Nesting— using parenthesis as a way of organizing your search terms (keywords and phrases) by placing them in parentheses. The parentheses make it possible to group 2 or more search terms into a set, so that the resulting set can then be combined with another search term or set of terms.

Examples:

Dallas AND (football OR basketball) —finds sources on either sport in Dallas.

(rain forest* OR rainforest*) AND (Mexico OR Brazil) —finds sources on the rainforests (spelled either way) of either country.

(television AND violen*) AND (children OR youth OR adolescenc* OR teen*) —finds sources related to the effects of violent television on those under 21.

(ADD OR attention deficit disorder) AND adult* —finds sources concerning adults with attention deficit disorder.

television AND (children OR youth) —finds sources on the effects of television on children or youth.

(Vietnam OR Vietnamese) NOT war —finds sources on Vietnam but not the war.

college students AND (financial aid OR scholarships) —finds sources on either financial aid or scholarships for college students.

(aids OR hiv) AND (college students OR youth) NOT high school students —finds sources on college students with aids or hiv, but will exclude material on high school students.

(multicultural OR intercultural OR diversity) AND education —finds sources on multicultural education.

(seasonal affective disorder OR winter blues) AND (mood OR depression) —finds sources on how seasons affect mood.

Proximity searching—a way specifying that your search terms be found within a certain distance of each other. Use **NEAR** to indicate a proximity search.

Examples:

Woods NEAR Tiger —finds sources on either Tiger Woods or Woods, Tiger.

art NEAR history —finds sources on either art history or the history of art.