



USING BOOLEAN TO SEARCH LIBRARY CATALOGS AND ELECTRONIC DATABASES BY KEYWORD

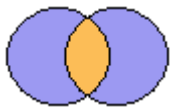
An important feature of online catalogs and electronic databases is *keyword searching*. Keyword searching allows you to search for a single word, a phrase, or a combination of words and phrases. *Examples:*

- drugs
- drug abuse
- “drug abuse” AND “athletes”

Boolean logic is a name used for a query strategy used when 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. Parentheses and quotation marks make it possible to group 2 or more 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. *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.

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. *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.

OR—finds records with either term. Use the term **OR** to broaden your search. *Examples:*



- gun* **OR** firearm —finds sources that contains either term.
- Dallas Cowboys **OR** Miami Dolphins —finds sources containing either team.

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



- Troy **NEAR** Aikman —finds sources on either Troy Aikman or Aikman, Troy.
- art **NEAR** history —finds sources on either art history or the history of art.

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 cut off, 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 in the sources, in the order keyed). Sometimes a phrase is called a “character string.” *Examples:*



- “college students financial aid seasonal affective disorder”

Note: Some search tools require that phrases be enclosed in quotation marks.

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.

Still not getting the results you need?



- Check your typing and spelling!
- Reexamine the logic of your search. Are there other ways to say it? More terms?
- Try the search in another search engine. The overlap can be surprisingly low.
- Remember, it's a Worldwide Web. Your truncated word may be another language.
- Have a good idea which organization might have compiled your data? Use **www.google.com** or **www.yahoo.com** to find and go directly to their site.

And last but not least...

- Perhaps you were too optimistic that someone has compiled the information and is giving it away. Ask a librarian to see if we own information on your topic.