Tips and Tricks for Searching Library Databases

Boolean Operators

Use Boolean Operators between your search terms to BROADEN or NARROW your results.

There are three basic Boolean Operators:

- **AND** – *Narrows your search*
  Use to connect unique aspects/variables of your search topic.
  Tells the database that ALL of your search terms must be in the resulting records.
  > *Example: Homeless **AND** Teens*
  > *Example: Cloning **AND** Humans **AND** Ethics*

- **OR** – *Broadens your search*
  Use to connect two or more synonyms or related words.
  Tells the database that ANY of your search terms can be in the resulting records.
  > *Example: Teens **OR** Children*
  > *Example: Depression **OR** Antidepressants*

- **NOT** – *Narrows your search*
  Use to exclude a search term from your search results
  Tells the database to remove results from your search that contain the search term.
  > *Example: Teens **NOT** Children*
  > *Example: Cloning **NOT** Sheep*

Create Search Strings with Boolean Operators

When you combine search terms with Boolean Operators, it is called a search string. Several search strings are shown in the examples above.

TIP: You CAN use more than one type of Boolean Operator in a search string, but you must put any search terms that are combined with OR in parentheses.

> *Example: (Teens OR children) AND depression*

> *Example: Environment AND (water OR lake OR river) AND pollution*

Other Helpful Search Tricks:

- **" " (Quotation Marks)** – *Narrows your search*
  Use around a phrase to search for that EXACT phrase.
  > *Example: "Attention deficit disorder" AND education*

- *** (Asterisk)** – *Broadens your search*
  Use at the end of a partial word to find all potential forms of the word.
  > *Example: Prevent* = prevent, preventive, preventing, prevention, etc.*
  > *Example: Prevent* AND Alzheimer's*

Use Database Limits to FOCUS your Search Results

After a search, a database will often have a set of "limits" on the side of your results that allow you to further focus or refine your results.

Helpful limits for Focusing/Refining your search results:

- **Subject** – Use the Subject filter (on the side of your search results) to narrow your results to articles assigned that specific subject term.

- **Publication Date** – Find only articles within a specific date range.

- **Peer-Reviewed** – Find only articles from peer-reviewed, scholarly journals.

- **Full Text** – Find only articles that are available full-text from the HTC Library (removes articles available through Interlibrary Loan from other libraries).