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).