

Keyword Searching in Library Databases

Choosing Keywords

Choosing your search terms, or keywords, correctly can mean the difference between relevant and irrelevant results. Start with your thesis question for inspiration on choosing the most relevant keywords.

Example thesis question: How are concussions related to extra-curricular high school sports affecting academic success in adolescents?

Think of **keywords** and **alternative keywords** that may be helpful for your search.

Main keywords:	concussions	"academic success"
Alternative keywords	OR CTE OR "brain injury"	OR grades OR graduation


Boolean Logic

Boolean Logic allows you to conduct a more specific search and find relevant and specific information using **and**, **or**, and **not**.

AND	OR	NOT
Search results will contain both keywords	Search results will contain at least one of the keywords	Search results will not contain the keyword following <i>not</i> .
concussions AND "academic success"	concussions OR CTE	concussions NOT fractures

Using Boolean Logic in an Advanced Search

Boolean Operators may be used in most academic databases. In this example, an advanced search is used and the terms have been separated into separate boxes.




Searching: **Academic Search Premier** | [Choose Databases](#)

concussion OR CTE	Select a Field (optio... ▾	Search	Clear	?
AND ▾	"academic success" OR grades	Select a Field (optio... ▾		

Nesting

Boolean operators can also be used by nesting your search terms using parentheses in place of the boxes in the advanced search.



Searching: **Academic Search Premier** | [Choose Databases](#)

(concussion OR CTE) AND "academic succes"	Search	?
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[Search Options ▸](#) [Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#)

Searching Toolkit

Databases allow for many different types of search strategies that you may utilize. We recommend the following:

Phrase Searching:

Phrase searching allows you to search for a specific phrase, as opposed to individual words. The quotation marks act as a bracket, grouping the words together. Use quotations on two-or-more word phrases.

Example:

older adult = 136,421 results

"older adult" = 14,705 results

Truncating

Truncation allows a researcher to run a single search for a word with multiple possible endings. **Most academic databases use the asterisk (*) to truncate, however, check the HELP menu for specifics.**

Truncated Word	Possible Results
vaccin*	vaccine, vaccinate, vaccinated, vaccinating, vaccination, etc.

Wildcards

Use wildcards in databases to search for an unknown character or words with multiple spellings. **Most databases will either use a question mark (?) or a pound sign (#) to represent wildcards.** Replace each unknown character with the wildcard symbol.

Wildcard ?	Possible Results
ne?t	neat, next, nest

**The database will not find "net" because the ? indicates a missing letter.*

Wildcard #	Possible Results
colo#r	color or colour

**The # wildcard will find alternative spellings for words.*

Limiters

Databases allows you to limit to specific types of articles, specific ranges of publication, or specific geographies (among others). You can apply limiters before you search or after you have run the search.

Source Types

- ☒ All Results
- ☐ Magazines (1,365)
- ☐ Trade Publications (678)
- ☐ Newspapers (402)
- ☐ Academic Journals (265)
- ☐ Industry Profiles (56)

Limit To

- ☐ Full Text
- ☐ References Available
- ☐ Peer Reviewed

2011

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