

DATABASE RESEARCH BASICS

A. Keyword vs. Subject Searches

Keyword – searches any word(s) you enter anywhere within the database (text, title, notes, author, etc.)

Subject – searches the subject terms assigned by a cataloger or an indexer, allowing you to find all resources on a topic under one heading

What's the difference?

SUBJECT

narrows a search
uses a subject term
searches only the subject field
can search multiple subject terms

KEYWORD

broadens a search
uses any word
searches all fields
can use Boolean combinations

B. Combination Searches (Boolean) Allows you to connect two or more search words or phrases

- **AND** (narrows: cats and dogs)
- **OR** (broadens: cats or feline)
- **NOT** (eliminates: cats not dogs)

Nesting: When using OR with either AND or NOT, use parentheses around the OR terms to clarify relationships

- (cats or feline) and diet

C. Limiting Restricts results to items meeting certain criteria

- date or date range
- language
- publication type
- peer reviewed or refereed (scholarly)

D. Truncation Allows searching for word variations

- Truncation symbols vary by database. Common symbols include: * ! ? \$
For example: politic* will include these results: politics, political, politician, politicians.

F. Creating Effective Search Statements

Omit unnecessary words

~~Effect of~~ television violence ~~on~~ children

AND/OR with Nesting and Truncation

(television or tv) and violen* and child*

RESEARCH TIPS

- **Use the Help screen** to understand how each database works
- **Define your topic**
 - List as many different terms and synonyms as possible
 - List any subtopics
- **When doing a keyword search**
 - Find a book or article that is exactly right for your topic
 - Look at the subject terms assigned to that item
 - Re-do the search using those subject terms
- **Too few results? None? Not on topic?**
 - Check your spelling
 - Use different search terms, synonyms
 - Use truncation
 - Broaden your search with OR
 - Search a different database
- **Too many results?**
 - Use more specific terms
 - Limit by language, publication, date, etc.
 - Use subject terms
 - Narrow your search with AND
- **Ask for help**
 - Email us at libraryref@bhc.edu
 - Call us at 309-796-5147
- **Allow enough time to obtain needed resources.** Not everything is available in our Library or full text online in the databases!