TRUNCATION & WILDCARD OPERATORS

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Truncation
Use the truncation symbols to create searches where you want to retrieve all variants of a word stem. The most commonly used truncation symbol is the asterisk (*).
For example, a search for **educat*** will retrieve: **educate, educating, education, educational, educator, educators, etc.**

Wildcards
A wildcard symbol is used within a word to provide for all possible spellings or variations inside a word or word stem. The most commonly used wildcard symbols for internal truncation are the number symbol (#) and the question mark (?).
For example, a search for **wom?n** will retrieve: **woman** and **women**

	Truncation Symbol (number of characters)	**Example**	**Finds**
EBSCO DATABASES (Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Psychlit, etc.)	* (one or more)	comput*	computer, computing, compute, etc…
	? (exactly one)	ne?t	neat, next, nest, newt, etc...
	??? (multiple ? ok)	bank???	bankers, banking
LEXIS-NEXIS (Newspapers, legal research, etc..)	! (one or more)	comput!	computer, computing, compute, etc…
	* (exactly one)	ne*t	neat, next, nest, newt, etc...
	***(multiple * ok)	bank***	bankers, banking
OCLC **First Search**	+ (plurals)	cat+ wax+	cat, cats wax, waxes
	* (one or more)	comput*	computer, computing, compute, etc…
	# (exactly one)	ne#t	neat, next, nest, newt, etc...
	?(0-9 characters)	colo?r	color, colour, colonizer, colorimeter
	?2(specify number)	colo?2r	color, colour (only)

Proximity operators
You can use proximity operators to search for words that occur within a specified number of words of each other in a database record. The most commonly used are **within** (w) or **near** (n). You combine the proximity operator with a number and place it between two words or phrases to specify how many words should be between them. The **within** operator in EBSCO databases searches for words within a specified number of one another, in the order that they were typed. The **near** operator looks for words within a specified number of each other in any order.

	Proximity Operator	**Example**	**Finds**
EBSCO DATABASES & OCLC First Search (Note: OCLC first search requires search terms to be in lower case, others will accept either case.)	w# (The number of words between two keywords)	tax w8 reform	Articles that have tax up to eight words apart from reform with the word tax coming **before** the word reform.
	n# (Maximum number of words between two keywords)	tax n5 reform	Articles that have the word tax up to five words apart from reform regardless of the order in which they appear.
LEXIS-NEXIS **# = any number between 1 and 255**	w/# (within # words)	bilingual w/3 education	Articles with bilingual **within** three words of education in any order.
	w/s (same sentence)	bilingual w/s education	Articles with both words in the **same sentence**.
	w/p (same paragraph)	bilingual w/p education	Articles with both words in the **same paragraph**.
	pre/# (# words before the second)	cable pre/3 television	Articles where cable is within 3 or fewer words **before** television.

KEYWORD SEARCHING & BOOLEAN OPERATORS

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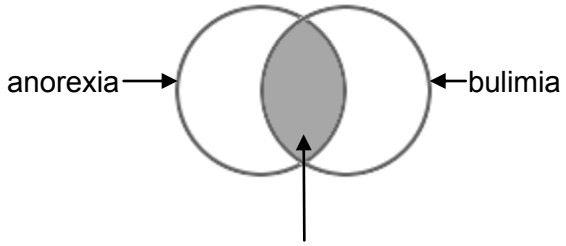
Keyword Searching

Every online database, whether it is a library catalog, an article index, or an Internet search engine, allows you to do keyword searching. When you do a keyword search in one of the library's article databases, the results you get back will consist of only those articles that have the words or phrases that you entered somewhere in the article. Doing a keyword search does not guarantee that you will find articles about your topic, it only guarantees that the words you entered appear somewhere in each of the articles retrieved--they could appear several times, or just once in the last paragraph. When doing a keyword search you should not enter your entire topic or thesis statement. The more words you enter in a search the fewer results you will get. Instead, you should pull out the main concepts or "key" words of your topic and enter those terms in your search.

Boolean Operators

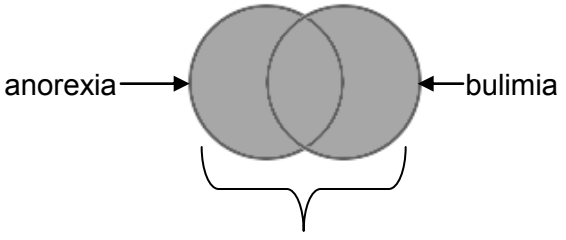
Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) allow you to combine words or phrases in order to narrow or broaden your results when searching an online database.

Using **AND** to separate terms or phrases will narrow your search giving you only results that contain both of the words you entered (shaded area below). Remember, you will miss those articles that only mention anorexia or bulimia.



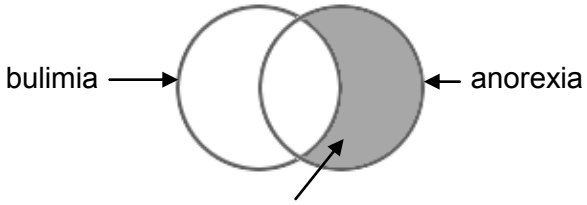
anorexia **AND** bulimia

Using **OR** to separate terms or phrases–best used for synonyms or related terms–will broaden your search, giving you articles with either of the search terms you entered (shaded area below).



anorexia **OR** bulimia

Using **NOT*** to separate terms will also limit your search. This is especially useful when you get results that are unconnected to your topic but that are commonly used in relation to one or more of your search terms. If you were writing a paper only about anorexia, and not about any other eating disorder, using NOT would eliminate any article that mentions bulimia. There is a down side to this, in that you will miss some articles that mention anorexia in addition to bulimia.

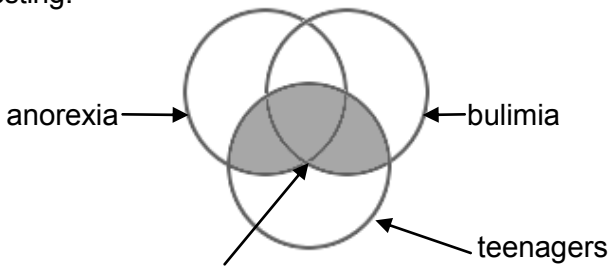


anorexia **NOT** bulimia

*Some databases use **AND NOT** (Lexis-Nexis) or **ANDNOT** in place of **NOT**. Also some systems are case sensitive, requiring you to use capital letters when using Boolean Operators. Make sure to look at the **HELP** or **SEARCH TIPS** screen of each database you are searching to find out the Boolean operators and rules specific to that database.

Nesting

If you use more than one Boolean Operator in the same search statement, you will need to group your keywords with parentheses to let the database know how you want the words combined. This is called nesting.



(Anorexia **OR** Bulimia) **AND** Teenagers

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