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Library Guide

Tips to Optimize Your Database Search

Search Syntax	Meaning	Examples
AND	The AND operator locates articles that contain all of the key words or phrases.	cats AND dogs
OR	The OR operator locates articles that contain at least one of the key words or phrases.	cats OR dogs
NOT	The NOT operator eliminates articles that contain certain key words or phrases.	cats NOT dogs
*	Truncation includes alternate word endings such as plurals and tense variations in your query.	farm* for: farmer, farming, farmland etc.
" "	Enclose a phrase in quotation marks to find multiple words appearing next to one another in a specified order.	"affirmative action"
()	Boolean searches are conducted in the following order of precedence-- NOT, AND, OR--unless parentheses are used. Use NOT and OR together to limit your search. Use AND and OR together to expand your search.	(dolphin NOT fish) OR porpoise health AND (kids OR children)
Putting it all Together	For example, to locate references to the various earthquake(s) in California or Washington, excluding those in San Francisco.	(California OR Washington) AND earthquake* NOT "San Francisco"

Search Methods	Description and Usage
Quick Search	
	Keyword Search is useful when you want to locate articles based upon your own combination of key words and phrases in full text.
	Natural Language is a means of expressing a query in simple language without using Boolean operators. ie. <i>Is there life on other planets.</i>
	Subject Headings Search is useful when you have a specific research topic in mind and you want to use a subject index to quickly locate articles related to that topic.
Advanced Search	
	Advanced search allows experienced users to search multiple fields, including full text, author and title. In addition, graphic caption and proximity searching is available. See the Advanced Search Help Topics for more information on the advanced search methods.
Topic Browse or Subject Search	
	Topic browse is useful when you want to search a category for a research topic or to narrow a general topic to a more specific area. Locate documents by exploring categories, topics and subtopics in a multi-level subject tree.

Sorting	Description	Usage
Relevance	Articles that contain the highest number of key words or phrases in your query are returned at the top of the article title list.	Keyword searches are defaulted to return your results by relevance unless you change the setting to date order.
Date	Articles are returned in reverse chronological order, with the most recently dated articles at the top.	Subject Headings search results are always returned in reverse date order.