

Online Search Tips from CHS Library

TECHNIQUES for Retrieving Better Search Results within

Databases, Library Catalogs, and the Internet

1. **"QUOTATION MARKS"**: putting quotation marks (" ") around a search term is called an "exact phrase search". It retrieves the results that have the phrase exactly as typed.

Example: "capital punishment" retrieves that phrase exactly.

2. **WILDCARD (ASTERISK *)**: use of a wildcard (truncation) symbol will retrieve variations of a word. An asterisk (*) may be placed in front of, or after, a word or word portion, thus improving search results.

Example 1: the search robot* medic* retrieves results that include robot, robots, robotic(s), medicine, medical, medicinal, etc.

Example 2: the search *glycemia retrieves results for hypo- and hyperglycemia.

3. Boolean Searches:

AND joins two separate concepts or terms in your search results. Use of "AND" narrows your search. Example: the search "capital punishment" AND "lethal injection" retrieves results that contain both terms.

OR is used to find synonyms for one concept. Use of "OR" broadens your search.

Example: the search "capital punishment" OR "death penalty" retrieves results that contain either of these terms.

NOT is used to retrieve results that exclude a certain word or term.

Example: the search robots NOT fiction retrieves results about robots, but not works of fiction or science fiction about robots.

AVOID the following:

4. Avoid using **LONG SENTENCES** or **PHRASES**, there is no need to include prepositions (a, an, as, the, etc.).

4a. Example (avoid this): the keyword search why do people become terrorists retrieves nothing in the CHS9 library catalog, both in speech books. (There must be more books, right?)

How can I find more sources?

Revise the search why do people become terrorists by using a synonym and truncation.

Truncate "terrorists" and use the synonym "motivation" in place of "why do people become".

4b. Example (revised search): The new search terror* motiv* retrieves general sources about terrorism, and specific titles about suicide bombers and those who choose to be terrorists.

4c. Use a variety of keywords: Broaden your results by using words like; terrorism, terrorist(s), suicide bomber(s).

Revising the search terms provides much better results!

Revise your search IF you get no results, too few results, or too many results.

USING your search results:

Search Screens: Become familiar with search screen options including:

1. Toolbars (*Advanced Search, etc.*)
2. Sidebars (*citation tools, printing, email, videos, audios, graphics, resource lists, eBooks (GVRL), etc.*)
3. Drop-down menus including "Sort by"
"Sort by" menus in *databases* and *websites* let you sort your results by relevance, date, etc.
"Sort by" menus in *library catalogs* let you sort by author, title, date, relevance or *call number.

Library Catalogs:

1. Sorting a 'library results list' by "call number" arranges the list in order by subject.
2. When using print sources, write the call number (including letters) for easy retrieval of materials.