Search Techniques & Tips

Keyword Searching

Terms that represent the significant ideas of your topic. Select words from your research question and brainstorm synonyms and related words by reading up on your topic in a more general reference source or by reviewing subject terms or terms in an abstract for relevant articles or books from an initial database search

Tip: do not capitalize words or use punctuation

Tip: Most databases automatically search plural forms of words and alternate spellings. Some will suggest correct spelling. **Only Google Scholar** automatically corrects misspellings.

Refining Your Search

Phrase searching

- Use quotation marks around search terms to search as a phrase, e.g. "monterey bay"

- In Scopus quotations marks are searched as a 'loose phrase.' Use curly brackets { } to search an exact phrase.

Truncation   *

- Replaces multiple characters
- behav* finds behave, behavior, behaviour, behavioural, behaviourism, etc.
- Engineering Village supports truncation at the beginning of a word, e.g. *sorption returns adsorption, absorption, desorption, resorption
- (Does not work well with Google Scholar; rely on GS's autostemming or include different forms of the words you want to find using an OR statement (see below).)

Wildcards   ?

- Replaces one character
- wom?n finds woman, women

Boolean Operators

- Use to link concepts and narrow or broaden a search
- AND: finds results with your **all** search terms. AND narrows your search.
- OR: finds results with any of your search terms. OR broadens your search.

- NOT: finds results with only one of your search terms. NOT narrows your search. (Use a minus symbol in Google Scholar)
- Use parentheses to control the order of operations for your Boolean operators.
- More about Boolean from U. Hawaii (on the tabs: http://bit.ly/2kzwfdS)

Proximity

- W/n (Scopus)
- Pre/n (ProQuest)
- NEAR/n (Web of Science)
- (growth W/2 rate AND (rockfish OR sebastes NOT cowcod) AND diet*)

Limiting with Facets/Filters

Refine your search results list by using **facets** (usually found along the left side of your results list.

- Common facets include:
  - Date published
  - Document type
  - Source title
  - Author name
  - Subject area/Discipline
- Many databases allow you to choose a parameter and **Limit** your results to that parameter only or to **Exclude** that parameter from your results.

Database Search Tips

- Scopus
- Web of Science
- Compendex (Choose Compendex from the Engineering Village database selection box)
- GeoRef (Choose GeoRef from the Engineering Village database selection box)
- Google Scholar:
  - SJSU King Library guide
  - University of Pittsburgh library guide
  - Google help center
- ProQuest Biological Sciences guide
- ProQuest ASFA guide
- ProQuest Earth, Atmospheric & Aquatic Science Collection guide