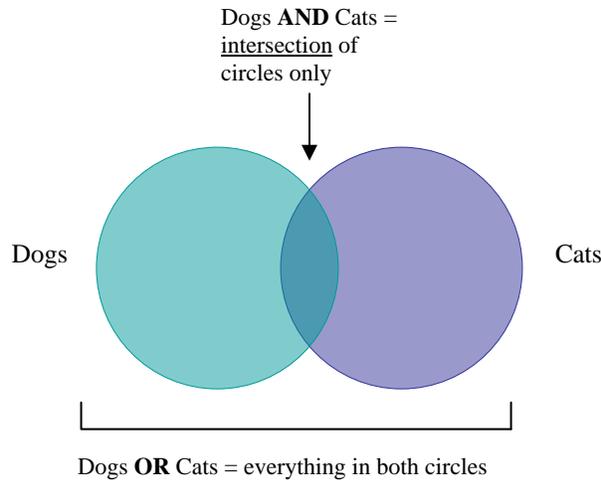


# Advanced Search Strategies

## Boolean Searching - AND, OR, NOT



**NOT** will avoid results in the intersection of the circles

Dogs **NOT** Cats = only the non-intersecting section of the Dogs circle

Cats **NOT** Dogs = only the non-intersecting section of the Cats circle

## **Parentheses will help you group and order a mixture of Boolean operators:**

(mouse OR rat OR mice) AND cats

((mouse OR rat) AND trap) OR mousetrap



Nested parentheses

**In nested queries, the innermost parenthetical group is processed first**

## Proximity Searching

Proximity operators vary by database (see next section of this handout for details). There are two standard types:

**Near** – Finds words within a certain number of each other, **regardless of word order**.

**Within** – Finds words within a certain number of each other **in the order you specify**.

## Phrase Searching

You can keep words together as a phrase by enclosing them in quotes “”.

## Wildcards and Truncation

A **wildcard symbol** replaces a single character in a word and can stand in for anything. It is generally represented as a question mark “?”.

A **truncation symbol** replaces everything that follows and can stand for any string of characters. It is generally represented as an asterisk “\*”.

## In ProQuest databases

- W/#** Find documents where these words are within some number of words apart (either before or after). Use when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text."  
*Example: computer W/3 careers*
- W/PARA** Finds documents where these words are within the same paragraph (within approx. 1000 characters). Use when searching for keywords within "Document Text."  
*Example: internet W/PARA education*
- W/DOC** Find documents where all the words appear within the document text. Use W/DOC in place of AND when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text" to retrieve more comprehensive results.  
*Example: Internet W/DOC education*
- NOT**  
**W/#** Find documents where these words appear but are not within some number of words apart (either before or after). Use when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text."  
*Example: computer NOT W/2 careers*
- PRE/#** Find documents where the first word appears some number of words before the second word. Use when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text."  
*Example: world pre/3 web*

## Wildcards and Truncation for Most Databases and Search Engines

Use the wildcard and truncation symbols to create searches where there are unknown characters, multiple spellings or various endings. Neither the wildcard nor the truncation symbol can be used as the first character in a search term.

**The wildcard** is represented by a question mark ?. To use the wildcard, enter your search terms and replace each unknown character with a ?.

For example, type **ne?t to find all citations containing neat, nest or next.**

NOTE: In EBSCO databases this search does not find "net" because in EBSCO the wildcard symbol always replaces a single character. However, in JSTOR this search will find "net" because in JSTOR the wildcard can stand for no character.

**Truncation** is represented by an asterisk (\*). To use truncation, enter the root of a search term and replace the ending with an \*.

For example, type **comput\* to find the words computer or computing.**

## In JSTOR

### Proximity Operators in JSTOR

JSTOR allows you to find terms that are within a specific number of words of each other using the **tilde (~) as a proximity operator**.

For example, **to search for an item with the terms debt and forgiveness within ten words of each other**, you would construct the following query:

**"debt forgiveness"~10**

NOTE: Proximity searches are based on word count only. All punctuation is ignored.

### Boosting Relevance of Search Terms in JSTOR

JSTOR uses a complex relevancy ranking system. You can increase the importance of any term in your search by boosting its relevance score **using the caret symbol (^) followed by a number** ("the boost factor").

The format is as follows: term^number

**For example, the query: cat^7 dog gives an instance of the word cat in a document seven times more weight than the word dog.**

### Fuzzy Search in JSTOR

JSTOR offers search options based on fuzzy logic. You can find words with similar spellings to your search term by using the fuzzy search feature. The **fuzzy operator is a tilde at the end of a search term**.

**For example, the query ti:dostoyevsky~ will help to locate articles with dostoyevsky in the title, as well as the variants dostoevsky, dostoievski, dostoevsky, dostoyevski, dostoevskii, dostoevski, etc.**

NOTE: Fuzzy searching searches a potentially very large number of words. Narrowing a fuzzy search to title or other narrow field is highly recommended.

### Plurals in JSTOR

JSTOR allows you to **search for the singular and plural form of a word at the same time, by adding an ampersand (&) to the end of the singular form of a word**. The search engine:

**cat&** will find cat and cats

**box&** will find box and boxes.

NOTE: **The plural operator can only locate regular plurals in English. It will not find irregular plural forms (person/people and goose/geese), or plurals in other languages (beau/beaux).**

## In EBSCO databases

### Proximity searching

The proximity operators are composed of a letter (N or W) and a number (to specify the number of words). The proximity operator is placed between the words that are to be searched, as follows:

**Near Operator (N)** - N5 finds the words if they are within five words of one another regardless of the order in which they appear.

**Within Operator (W)** - In the following example, W8 finds the words if they are within eight words of one another and in the order in which you entered them.

- **tax N5 reform** to find results that would match tax reform as well as reform of income tax.
- **tax W8 reform** to find results that would match tax reform but would not match reform of income tax.

### Boolean search examples

- (social justice OR human rights) AND Catholic Church NOT fiction NOT books
- Asia AND femini\*  
gets feminism, feminist, femininity
- ((women n5 politic\*) AND Muslim) NOT Books

### Plurals

In order to provide the most comprehensive search results, when EBSCOhost conducts a search, it may return results that include both the single and plural versions of your search terms.

**When a singular term is entered, EBSCO automatically searches the default plural (e.g., egg and eggs). However, if the plural is entered, EBSCO do not automatically search for the singular version of the term.** If the plural is spelled differently, (e.g. child, children), a search is not expanded unless the expander is checked. EBSCO may also return results with regional spellings (e.g., color, colour), acronyms (e.g., TV, T.V.) as well as a limited number of synonyms.

## Questions? Need more information?

Check out the help or search tips screens in each database. You will find everything in this handout and more. You can also contact the Reference Librarians for individual assistance at 713-525-2188 or [reference@stthom.edu](mailto:reference@stthom.edu).