

Tips for Searching a Database

Searching Tips for Better Results!

Boolean Operators

Using the words AND, OR, and NOT, strategically will allow you to tailor your search results using multiple examples.

An Example using the Boolean Operator AND

With the search mental health AND exercise, this means that both words must be in the search results.

An Example using the Boolean Operator OR

With the search exercise OR fitness, this means that either word can be in the search results.

An Example using the Boolean Operator NOT

With the search exercise NOT weight, this means that the word weight will be excluded from the search results.

Quotes

Use quotes to ensure you are retrieving results with an exact phrase. The search “mental health” AND exercise, where the phrase mental health is in quotations, will prevent results that mention the words mental and health keywords separately. The quotations will require that those two words appear in the results side by side, in a phrase.

Parentheses

Using parentheses can help you organize a longer or more complicated search. For example, the search (“mental health” OR wellness” AND (exercise OR fitness) NOT (weight OR obesity), where “mental health OR wellness” are in parentheses, exercise OR fitness are in parentheses, and weight OR obesity are in parentheses, will get search results that connect the concepts of mental health and exercise, but does not include results that discuss exercise’s effect on weight.

Truncation and Wildcards

An asterisk at the end of a root word will find other forms of that word, and a “wildcard” will replace a letter in a word. Wildcard symbols can vary by databases.

As an example of truncation, health*, where the word health has an asterisk at the end of it, can show up in the search results as health, healthy, healthier, healthiness, and so on.

As a wildcard example, the word woman, where the a is replaced with a question mark, can show up in the search results as woman with an a, womyn with a y, women with an e, and so on.