

This guide gives brief information on how to put your search together. There is more help on the Library webpages at www.lshtm.ac.uk/library/help/help.html.

NOTE: Not all of the resources allow you to use all of these functions. Please check the 'About this database' link on the Library databases pages or the help pages supplied with the resource itself.

Truncation and wildcards

Truncation can be used in practically all search systems (Google automatically does this for you). Just add an asterisk (*) to the root of the word and the system will automatically look for words which start with the letters you have entered, regardless of which characters come after it.

Example:

Entering *organisat** will find the following words:

organisation, organisations, organisational, organisationally

Do not make the root of the word too short. Entering *organis** will find the following additional words:

organism, organisms, organise, organised, organiser, organist.

Wildcards allow you to specify that one character may differ or may be missing. The punctuation used to denote wildcards differs between databases, check the 'About this database' link on the Library databases pages or the help pages supplied with the resource itself.

Example:

Entering *organiz#at** will find the following words in the OvidSP databases:

organisation, organization, organisations, organizations, organisational, organizational, organisationally, organizationally

Proximity searching

Some search resources allow you to specify how close together you require two words. This is very useful when you are looking for articles on a topic which does not have a clearly defined name or vocabulary.

Example:

Entering *health adj3 policy* will find the following phrases in OvidSP:

health policy, health related policy, policy making in health etc.

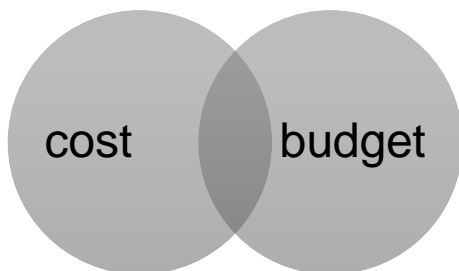
You can use proximity searching together with brackets and the word OR to find an almost infinite variety of permutations.



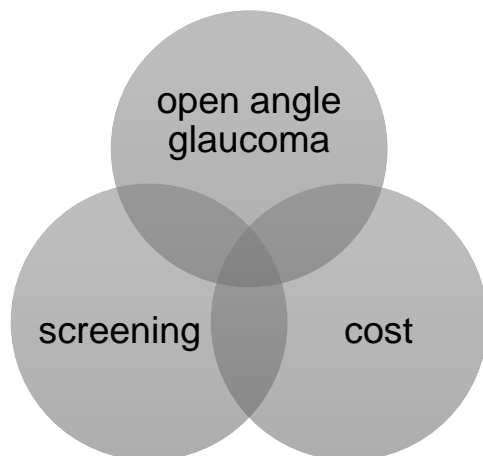
Example:

Entering *(health or medical) adj3 (promotion or education)* will find the following phrases:

health promotion, health education, medical promotion, medical education, promotion and advocacy in health etc.

Putting it all together using Boolean operators**OR**

Use OR when you are entering your synonyms. OR will find articles with one or more of your terms, the light and dark grey sections of the Venn diagram.

AND

Use AND when you are combining different topics together. AND will find articles with all of your terms, only the dark grey section in the centre of the Venn diagram.

Combining your searches together

I recommend that you use both subject headings and textwords to search for items on a particular subject. This gives you two different ways to make sure you retrieve an item, reducing your chances of missing something important.

You would structure your search something like shown below:

1. Concept 1 textword search
2. Concept 1 subject heading search
3. #1 or #2
4. Concept 2 textword search
5. Concept 2 subject heading search
6. #4 or #5
7. Concept 3 textword search
8. Concept 3 subject heading search
9. #7 or #8
10. #3 and #6 and #9