

Database Search Techniques

Keyword Searching

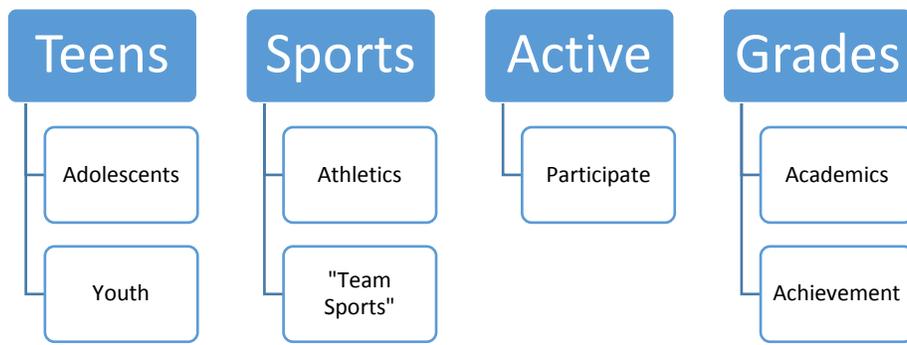
In databases you identify resources by placing in keywords or keyword phrases (can also be called search terms).

Steps to help identify keywords:

1. **State the topic or question.**
2. **Highlight the key concepts.**
3. **List similar phrases and synonyms.**

Sample topic: Teens active in team sports earn higher grades.

From the sample question, you can identify the key terms, listing additional options.



In the database a sample search could be: **adolescents AND sports AND participation AND academics.**

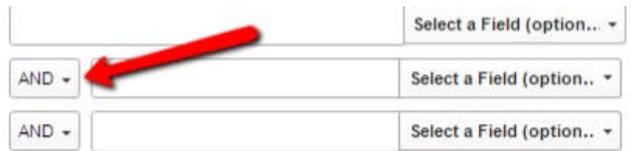
- Also, databases use subject terms or controlled vocabulary to express terms. Review this Subject or Thesaurus in a database for more search term options.

See the information below on truncation on how to further vary search terms.

Boolean Connectors

In a research database you search using Boolean Connectors between keywords including: AND, OR, and NOT.

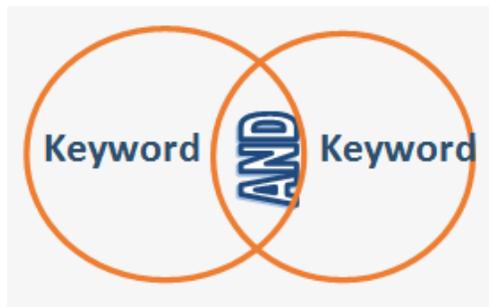
- In a database select the **Advanced Search** option to view the connectors. The default in a database is to place AND between keywords. Clicking on the drop down allows you to switch to the other options.



Use the **AND** connector to search for topics together.

- For example: football **AND** college athlete

This is a focused search seeking resources with both keywords. This is the most used connector and the default on in the databases.



Use the **OR** connector to search for similar terms.

- For example: lawsuit **OR** litigation.

This strategy produces broader results, as it brings back options for both topics.



Use the **NOT** connector to exclude words from a results.

- For example: college athlete AND football **NOT** soccer

This strategy provides focused results as it removes unwanted terms. This connector is used least often.



Truncation

Truncation is a way to search within a database for multiple keyword endings. The truncation symbol is placed at the end of the keyword, it is never used at the beginning.

A sample topic to research could be coaching and **mentorship**.

The search in the database, using the truncation symbol at the end of the word to bring back more results would look like this:

- **coaching AND mentor***

The database would look for mentor and variations like:



This is one way to broaden the search results.

- Be careful not to select too broad a term, like truncating fam*, as this will likely bring back too many broad results (including family, familiar, etc.) not directly related to the topic.

Each database may use a different symbol for truncation. Usually reviewing the help area of a database provides information on the types of symbols to use.

Wildcards

Wildcards are another advanced search technique where a specific character is used (?) to search for multiple spellings and related words. This technique is not used very often, but can be helpful in some search strategies.

If you are researching international sports organizations, you may want to review for the spelling organisations.

- You could set up a search using a wildcard like: **organi?ations AND tennis**.

Each database may use a different symbol and rules for wildcards. Usually reviewing the help area of a database provides this information.