



Searching Effectively: Phrase Searching & Truncation – English Transcript

In this tutorial, you'll continue to learn strategies that help you combine keywords into effective search strings. This will put you in control of your search results. In a previous video, you learned how to use the three Boolean operators -- AND, OR, NOT.

Let's review. Using AND between two keywords tells the computer that both keywords must be present to be included in the search results. AND narrows the search.

Using OR between two keywords tells the computer to include search results that have one keyword, or the other keyword, or both of them. OR broadens the search.

Using NOT between two keywords means that the first keyword must be present, but the second keyword cannot be. NOT narrows the search.

Our first new strategy is called phrase searching. It narrows your search results. Here's how phrase searching works. Use quotation marks around a phrase when your keywords must be kept together in that exact order. This will force the computer to search for your keywords as a phrase not as individual words.

For example, let's look at the phrase -- polar ice cap. In a search like this, as three individual words, many of your results would be irrelevant. Instead, if you put quotation marks around the phrase, like this, you're telling the computer to limit results to articles that use these three words in this exact order.

Here are a few more examples of words that often appear together as a phrase. To avoid irrelevant results, put the phrase in quotation marks when using it as a keyword. Sometimes titles have many words in them like Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Using quotation marks will yield results that are only about that specific title.

If you're searching for information about red mason bees, put the entire phrase in quotation marks so you only get results about that type of bee. What if your topic was green energy in homes? By putting "green energy" in quotation marks along with the Boolean operator AND followed by homes, you will find results about houses that use renewable energy sources. Using the advanced search option of your library database or search engine, your search string might look like this.

Now you try. Where would you put quotation marks and which Boolean operator would you include if you were searching for how endangered species can be helped by habitat restoration?

Yes, your search string might look like this, using the Boolean operator AND while using quotation marks around both phrases.



Our next strategy is truncation. Truncation involves using special symbols at the end of a keyword to improve the quality and quantity of your search results. Truncation uses a symbol at the end of a word stem to find all variations of the word. The most commonly used truncation symbol is the asterisk, but some search engines or library databases may use a dollar sign or a question mark.

For example, say you were researching the benefits of laughter. If you shorten the word to laugh followed by an asterisk, you will get results that include the words laugh, laughable, laughing, laughter, etc.

Be careful not to truncate too early in the word. Otherwise, you could end up with many results that are not helpful. If you searched for L-A-U asterisk, instead of L-A-U-G-H asterisk, your results could include articles that have nothing to do with laughter, like ones about launch, laundry, and Laura.

Now it's your turn. If you were studying animal migration, how would you truncate the keyword migration? Truncating down to M-I-G-R-A-T asterisk may yield results that include these words - migrate, migrating, migration, and migratory.

Let's try one more. If you're studying the effects of weather on geology, how would you truncate the word geology?

How about G-E-O-L-O-G asterisk? That may yield results that include the words geological, geologist, and geology. Be careful not to truncate too soon. G-E-O asterisk could yield a lot of irrelevant results, including geode, geography, geometry, and even George.

To recap, in the two tutorials about searching effectively, we covered the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT plus phrase searching and truncation. Knowing how to use these search strategies puts you in the driver's seat to help you find exactly what you're looking for.

For specific examples and for more information about this topic and the entire research process, explore OSLIS. OSLIS -- Learn to Research. Research to Learn.