The right word is key!

- A keyword search is the default search in most databases.
- Make sure terms are spelled correctly.
- Don’t capitalize proper nouns
- Don’t use punctuation!
- Do Not search phrases
- You could also use similar words that might also apply to, or describe your topic.
- If you aren’t sure about what keywords to use, try doing a topic search and looking for “related topics”
- Once you find a useful article look for key words you can use to search.

Boolean searching

**AND**
- Use AND in a search to: narrow your results
- Tell the database that ALL search terms must be present in the resulting records

Example: cloning AND humans AND ethics

The purple triangle in the middle of the Venn diagram below represents the result set for this search. It is a small set using AND, the combination of all three search words.

**OR**
- Use OR in a search to: connect two or more similar concepts (synonyms)
- Widen your results, telling the database that ANY of your search terms can be present in the resulting records

Example: cloning OR genetics OR reproduction

**NOT**
- Use NOT in a search to: exclude words from your search
- narrow your search, telling the database to ignore concepts that may be implied by your search terms

Smaller results

Example: Java NOT coffee

The purple circle represents the result set for this search. It is a smaller set because only one term is valid using the NOT operator.

Source: http://libguides.mit.edu/
**Truncation or Wildcard Searching**

* ! ? #

- Similar to keyword searching, but replace the ending of a word with the corresponding symbol the database uses (most use the *). Example: searching for Bank would tell the database to look for all possible endings to that root. Results will include bank, banks, banking, bankers, bankruptcy, etc.

**Proximity Searching**

Near & Followed by

- NEAR operator
  - Allows you to search for terms that have a specified distance between each other, and are in any order. For example: education near female.

- FBY (followed by) operator
  - Allows you to search for terms that have a specified distance between each other, and are in a specified order. For example: heart fby head.

**Multiple term keywords**

By including multiple word keywords in (parenthesis) or “quote marks” tells the database to search those terms together. Results will have the whole term rather than just one word or the other.

For example, a search on the “civil war” will search the whole term rather than searching civil separate from war.

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*not all databases are laid out in the same format, but most, if not all databases have the same features & functions!