

Boolean Modifiers

Use Boolean modifiers such as phrase searching, truncation, and wildcards to make your search more effective and find more sources on your topic.

These modifiers determine how the keywords themselves are interpreted by the database.

For example if we were interested in “South american women’s roles in the textile industry,” our keywords may be “South America,” “women,” and “textile.”

Phrase searching is useful for searching compound words and phrases, like “South America.”

If you search South America on its own, the database treats the two words separately, retrieving results that have any mention of the words “South” and “America” anywhere in the article.

You can specify to the database that you want to search them as a single unit, with the words side by side in that exact order, by placing them between quotation marks. This is called phrase searching.

When using phrase searching, keep in mind that the database will search exactly what is placed between quotations. So, if a typo is made or another Boolean operator is used, the database will not correct nor interpret them, respectively.

Truncation and wildcards are useful for finding variants of words. It can help save time and expand your search.

For truncation, you replace the end of a word with an asterisk so that the database will search all words beginning with that stem.

So, if “textile” is truncated as textil*, the database will find results also containing textile and textiles.

Be wary of truncating too early in a word, as it can increase unwanted variants. For example truncating “textile” as text* will retrieve text, textures, texturize, textile, and so on. Few of these are related to our search topic, so we would not want to truncate “textile” so early on.

Wildcards are similar to truncation in that they also find variants of a word.

To employ a wildcard, take a word and replace a letter with the database’s designated wildcard symbol, usually a pound symbol or a question mark.

If you're not sure what wildcard symbol the database uses, check the database's "help" guide or ask for assistance from the library.

The database will then search for all words differing by the replaced letter.

For example, if we take "women" and replace the "e" with a wildcard, the database will retrieve results containing "woman" and "women."

If we were to combine all these boolean modifiers into one search strategy, we would want to search "South America" in quotations, textile truncated (textil*), and women with a wildcard (wom?n).

By including these boolean modifiers in our search, we'll effectively retrieve a wider range of results relevant to our topic.