Using Boolean Logic

Boolean Logic is fundamental to the search functions of online search engines and library databases. As a student, correctly utilizing a few key Boolean Operators and Modifiers will provide better and more accurate search results.

Quick Tips

- Use AND or NOT to narrow results; use OR to broaden results
- Some applications do not support the Asterisk Modifier. Instead, construct OR statements to search all variations
- Record each search string to avoid duplication

Boolean Operators

AND
Results will contain both words.
AND is also implied by a blank space between words.
E.g. Results from **Geriatric AND Driving** will contain both the words Geriatric and Driving.

OR
Results will contain one or more of the words.
E.g. Results from **Geriatric OR Elderly** will contain Geriatric or Elderly or both.

NOT
Results will not include the search term.
E.g. Results from **Elderly NOT "Middle Aged"** will contain Elderly but not "Middle Aged".

Search Modifiers
Quotation Marks " "
Results will contain the words together as specified.
E.g. Results from **"Middle Aged"** will contain Middle and Aged as a phrase.

Asterisk *
Results will contain words that begin with the search term.
E.g. Results from **Driv*** will contain Drive, Driver, Driving, Driven.

Parentheses ( )
Search terms can be group using parentheses.
E.g. Results from **(Geriatric OR Senior) AND "Driving Cessation"** will contain "Driving Cessation" and either or both the words Geriatric or Senior.

Search Strings

Boolean Operators and Modifiers can be combined to form search strings. E.g. A search string about driving cessation amongst seniors might look like this: **"Driving Cessation" AND (geriatric OR senior OR "older adults")**

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Adapted from Boolean Cheat Sheet (McMaster)