

Search techniques sheet

Knowing some basic search techniques to use in [Library Search](#) and [Library databases](#) (such as Scopus and JSTOR) will help you focus and refine your search - you can even use these techniques in internet search engines, such as Google!

Linking words: combine your keywords in useful ways

AND	e.g. jam AND toast Search results will only include resources that contain both the word jam and toast. A blank space between words also works for AND.
OR	e.g. jam OR preserve OR jelly OR confit Search results will contain resources that include one or more of these synonyms/terms.
NOT	e.g. Spreads NOT honey Search results will exclude resources that contain the keyword 'honey'.

Search tricks: make your keywords work harder

“ ” Speech marks	e.g. "chocolate spread" Phrase searching: search results will only include resources that contain the words 'chocolate' and 'spread' beside each other in a sentence.
* Asterisk	e.g. toast* Truncation: search results will include resources that contain words beginning with 'toast', e.g. toast, toasts, toasted, toasting, toaster.
() Parentheses	e.g. (jam* OR "chocolate spread") AND (toast* OR crumpet*) Use with synonyms: results will include resources that contain either the term jam or chocolate spread or both, and either toast or crumpet or both.
? Question mark	e.g. colo?r Wild card: use to replace one or more characters when you can spell a term several ways. Colo?r will find resources with both 'color' and 'colour'.

Searching top tips

- Use **AND** to narrow and reduce number of results
- Use **OR** to widen and increase the number of results
- Check the database you are using for alternative search tricks
- Experiment with a combination of search techniques to find the best results
- Use Advanced Search fields to restrict your search within the title, abstract, subject etc.
- If in doubt, keep your search simple