



# Searching Guide

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Updated:

## What is Boolean searching and why do I care?

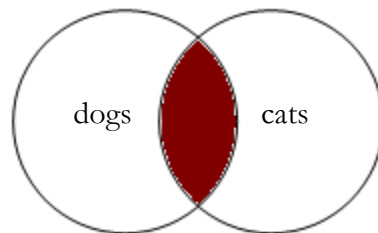
Boolean is a type of searching that allows users to use keywords and specific search operators to create more relevant results. It is used in most online databases, catalogues, and even some commercial search engines. Boolean is important to learn because majority of search engines do not understand search by query (like Google) which will make searching other databases very ineffective.

## Boolean Operators

The three basic Boolean search operators are **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**. The purpose of these search operators is to focus your search and connect various pieces of information to find exactly what you're looking for.

### AND

- Used to narrow your search
- Tells the database that all search terms must be included in results

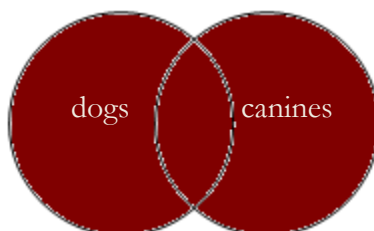


dogs AND cats

- The results from this search will include records that contain BOTH “dogs” and “cats”
- No records about just “dogs” or just “cats” will be included

### OR

- Used to broaden your search
- Best used to connect similar concepts or words together when not getting enough results with one keyword

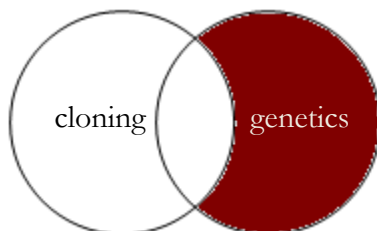


dogs OR canine

- The search is broadened by including records about BOTH “dogs” and “canines”, just “dogs”, and just “canines”

## NOT

- Used to exclude certain terms from your search
- Best used when the database keeps including subject terms that you don't want



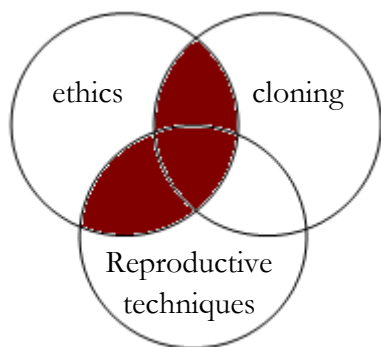
genetics NOT cloning

- The search is narrowed by pulling records about genetics and excluding all records that mention cloning

## Search Order

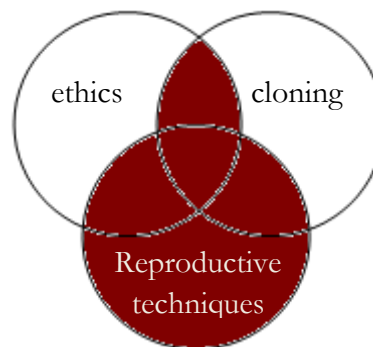
Databases will follow a chain of commands. Most will search for concepts connected by 'AND' first. If using a combination of 'AND' and 'OR', put the 'OR' concepts in brackets. Examples:

CORRECT!



ethics AND (cloning OR reproductive techniques)

WRONG!



ethics AND cloning OR reproductive techniques

## How to Search Phrases

Because many databases will automatically place an 'AND' between your search words, it will sometimes produce results that don't contain your intended phrase. To get around this we use parentheses. Example:

CORRECT!

"university students" AND "test anxiety"

This search will bring up records that contain the search phrases you want.

WRONG!

university students AND test anxiety

This search will bring up records that may not contain the search phrases you want.

## Truncation & Wildcards

The purpose of using truncation and wildcards is to broaden your search and find root words that have various endings (child = childs, children, childrens, childhood) or words that mean the same but spelt differently (colour and color). The symbols used for truncation and wildcards differ between databases. Check 'help' screens to find out what the symbols are.

### Truncation

To use truncation, enter the root word and add the truncation symbol at the end. Truncation symbols will vary by database; \*, !, ?, #. Example:

transplant\* = transplant, transplanted, transplanting, transplantation, transplanter, etc.

### Wildcard

The wildcard function can be used to find words that mean the same but are spelt differently, or find words where a letter in the middle changes. Like truncation symbols, wildcard symbols will vary by database; !, ?. Example:

wom!n = woman, women

behavio?r = behaviour, behavior

## Stop Words

Stop words are insignificant words that appear in a database, article, webpage, etc. The reason why it is important to exclude stop words from our search is because including them may lead to too many results.

- If the stop word is significant to your search, keep it included
- Many databases recognize stop words when they are included in a common subject heading
- Stop words vary by database check 'help' screens to find out what they are

### Common Stop Words

- |         |       |
|---------|-------|
| • a     | • be  |
| • an    | • are |
| • the   | • on  |
| • it    |       |
| • of    |       |
| • in    |       |
| • which |       |
| • into  |       |
| • if    |       |