



Hostos Community College Library

<http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library> (718) 518-4222

Library Instructional Services Basic Boolean Searching

Boolean operators (or logical connectors)-- **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**-- are used to link together keywords when creating a search statement. Boolean operators may be used in most databases, and are used to broaden or narrow a search. In the **CUNY+ online catalog**, as well as in most other databases, Boolean searching is available within the keyword search option. Like CUNY+, most licensed databases will require the use of Boolean operators and a well-constructed search strategy.

Always read screens carefully (especially HELP screens) or ask for assistance at the reference desk.

AND Keywords combined with **AND** will retrieve records only where *both* terms appear.

Example: daycare **AND** single parents (AND is used to narrow a search)

OR Keywords combined with **OR** will retrieve records where *either* one or both terms appear.

Example: latina **OR** hispanic (OR is used to broaden a search)

NOT Keywords combined with **NOT** will retrieve records with *the first term but not the second*.

Example: depression **NOT** mental (NOT is used to narrow a search)

USING BOOLEAN OPERATORS IN A SEARCH STATEMENT:

1. State your topic in one sentence:
race as a factor in death penalty sentencing
2. Break your topic down into key concepts or words:
concept 1:race **concept 2:** death penalty
3. Connect these words with the appropriate Boolean operators:
race **and** death penalty
4. Broaden your search using synonyms and/or variant spellings. Use parentheses, called “nested searching,” if you use more than one Boolean operator in a single search statement:
race **and** (death penalty **or** capital punishment)

TRUNCATION AND PLURALS

Many databases offer a search option called **truncation**. By attaching a designated symbol to the end of a word or word root the computer searches for **plurals** and/or variations of the word. The symbol is often a ? (consult help screens in database to verify). Do not place a truncation symbol after a common word root like “tele” or “man” as you will retrieve too many irrelevant hits.

Example: **hospi?** will retrieve hospice, hospices, hospital, hospitals, hospitable, etc

Example: **downsiz?** and **corporat?** will retrieve the same results as:
(downsize or downsizing or downsized) **and** (corporate or corporation or corporations)

Example: **employee?** Will retrieve both singular and plural, employee and

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