Searching with Boolean Operators

Boolean is a set of commands that can be used in almost every search engine, database, or online catalogue. The three basic boolean operators are: **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**.

Why use Boolean Operators?
- To connect your search words together to either narrow or broaden your set of results.
- To focus a search, particularly when your topic contains multiple search terms.

### Narrow your search using AND

Use **AND** in a search to:
- **Narrow your results**
- **Tell the database that ALL search terms must be present in the resulting records**
- **Example:** media **AND** violence – only those results that contain both *media* and *violence* will appear in your search results list.

- Note: **AND** is not required in all databases. For example, Google automatically puts **AND** in between search terms
- Though all your search terms are included in the results, they may not be connected together in the way you want. In this case, use **phrase searching** (putting search terms in quotations) to make your search results more specific. For example, “university students” and “test anxiety”.

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[Diagram showing the concept of AND in a search query with overlapping circles for media and violence, illustrating that only the intersection (both media and violence) is included.]
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Expand your search using OR

Use **OR** in a search to:
- Connect two or more similar concepts (synonyms)
- Broaden your results, telling the database that **ANY** of your search terms can be present in the resulting records
- Example: teenagers **OR** adolescents – only those results that contain either **teenagers** or **adolescents** will appear in your search results list.

Exclude your search using NOT

Use **NOT** in a search to:
- Exclude words from your search
- Example: psychology **NOT** cognitive – any results that contain the word **psychology** will appear in your results list except those results that also contain the word **cognitive**.

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