

Truncation or Wild Cards

Truncation symbols, or wild cards, are used to replace one or more letters in order to retrieve different forms of a search word. The symbols used are usually ? or *.

e.g. **crim*** would retrieve *crime, crimes, criminal, criminals, criminology, criminologist*.

Truncation can also be helpful where there are variant spellings of a word

e.g. **organi?ation** would retrieve **organisation** or **organization**.

Phrases

Many databases will automatically search two consecutive words as though they were joined by the boolean operator AND, and will therefore return records in which both the words appear, but separated rather than as a phrase. If you wish to search a phrase, enclosing the words in quotation marks is the most common means offered, although sometimes brackets are used.

e.g. "**human resources**" or (**human resources**)

Other tools

Many databases offer proximity operators, allowing you to specify how near one search word should be to another (e.g. within 5 words), and nesting, allowing you to combine boolean operators to define complex relationships between several search words. The Help function will describe what is available and give you examples to follow.

Further Help

Please contact a member of LIS staff if you need any help using E-Resources.

We are very happy to spend time helping you with your information searching needs.

You can make an appointment to see a Learning Advisor for your subject area, below is a link to the staff contact page of the LIS web site:

<http://www.ucsm.ac.uk/lis/libinfo/contacts/facultyliaison/index.php>

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Getting Started with E-Resources

E-Resources Search Tips

E-Resources will help you find high-quality information for your assignments.

You can access E-Resources from college or home.

This guide will give you some basic tips to help you use E-Resources more effectively.

This guide is available in other formats on request.

Before you start

- Think carefully about your topic and write down key words and phrases which describe it, or reflect different aspects of it
- The quality of your keywords will determine the quality of results that databases will give you
- E-Resources don't search for meanings, they just search for the words you give them
- Think of alternative words that might describe your topic, such as American spellings, plurals, broad terms and narrow terms

Choosing your databases

It is very important that you choose the right databases for your needs. Using the wrong database can cause unnecessary frustration.

- The library provides access to many different databases (over 70)
- Some databases contain subject specific information e.g. Health, Education, Sport etc.
- Some databases contain information on multiple subjects
- Some databases contain full-text articles
- Some databases only provide citations and abstracts

The best way to find the right database for your subject is to follow these steps:

1. Go to the library web site www.ucsm.ac.uk/lis
2. Choose **Resources for Your Subject**
3. Click on your subject
4. Under the Databases heading you will see 2 links, one will be to databases for your subject area, and the other will be to multidisciplinary databases
5. To access the database click on the blue title. If you want full-text articles, look under the Format column to make sure the database you have chosen provides full-text.

Passwords

Most databases will require an ATHENS password if you are using a computer off-campus.

To get an ATHENS password contact your library services help-desk.

Searching

1. It is unlikely that a single term will retrieve everything available on a particular subject. You need to think of synonyms, broader and narrower terms, and singular and plural terms, and try them in turn.
2. Avoid searching very general terms on their own, e.g. **Business**, you will retrieve far more than you can scan, and much of it will be irrelevant.
3. Use the search tools which all databases provide to make your search more focused and powerful.

Search Tools

Nearly all databases provide search tools of some kind to make it easier for users to retrieve helpful results when keyword searching. The following are the most frequently offered, but using the **Help** function in whichever database you are searching will give you much fuller information about constructing complex searches.

1. Boolean (or Logical) Operators

Boolean or logical searching involves the use of **AND & OR** to define the relationships between words.

The use of **AND** will narrow a search to make it more specific: the records retrieved must contain **both** search words. e.g. **advertising AND business**.

The use of **OR** will widen a search: the records retrieved may contain **either** or **both** search words. e.g. **Technologies OR Technologies**.