**General search techniques**

**Combining search terms**
Combining multiple topics in one search can be done with *Boolean operators*. Depending on the operator, it broadens or narrows your search results:

- **AND**
  All terms must appear in the search results

- **OR**
  One or both of the terms must appear in the search results

- **NOT**
  The terms must not appear in the search results

**Masking**
*Wildcards* (# or ? or $ (depending on the database), can replace none or one letter in spelling variations. Wildcards maximize your search results:

```
behavio#
```
This includes searches for *behavior*, *behaviour*.

**Phrase searching**
*Double quotes* around a phrase indicate that the specified search terms must follow each other in this exact order. Use phrase searching on established phrases only. It narrows your search and filters out irrelevant results:

```
"social media"
```

**Truncating words**
Breaking off search terms is called truncating. The *truncation mark* replaces a part of the word in order to search for singular, plural or other endings of the term at the same time. Truncation broadens your search:

```
gene*
```
This search includes *gene*, *genes*, *genetics*, *generation*.

**Nesting terms**
It can be more efficient to nest search terms using *brackets*, especially during complex searches. These are used to retrieve a broad set of search results:

```
swallow AND (spring OR summer)
```

**Field searching**
It is possible to search in *different fields* simultaneously such as title words and author name. By doing so, the search results will be fewer but more relevant:

```
research ethics
```
```
byrne
```

**Subject search**
In some databases you can use *subject headings* to search for literature. Subject headings are terms pre-defined by academics or algorithms. Use these headings to find relevant literature on the same topic:

```
athletics
```
```
Subject headings
```

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**Do you need more help with your literature research?**

*Search terms* | *Structured searches* | *Literature management* | *Citing literature* | *Creating alerts* | *Databases and other information sources*

The information specialists of the university library can advise and support you in searching and finding literature, economic data and legal and historical sources! For more information about the databases that fit your field go to:

https://libguides.ru.nl/subjects