

Searching Tools

Periodical databases provide tools to help you create efficient searches. Below are explanations of the various tools and techniques available to you. Please note that not all tools and techniques work in every database. Always check a database's help screens or ask a librarian if you are not getting the results you want.

Boolean Operators

Allow you to expand or narrow your search by connecting search terms in mathematical ways.

AND: Using AND between search terms **narrows** the scope of your search because the results will be required to contain the words before AND after it. The more terms you connect with AND, the narrower your search will become.

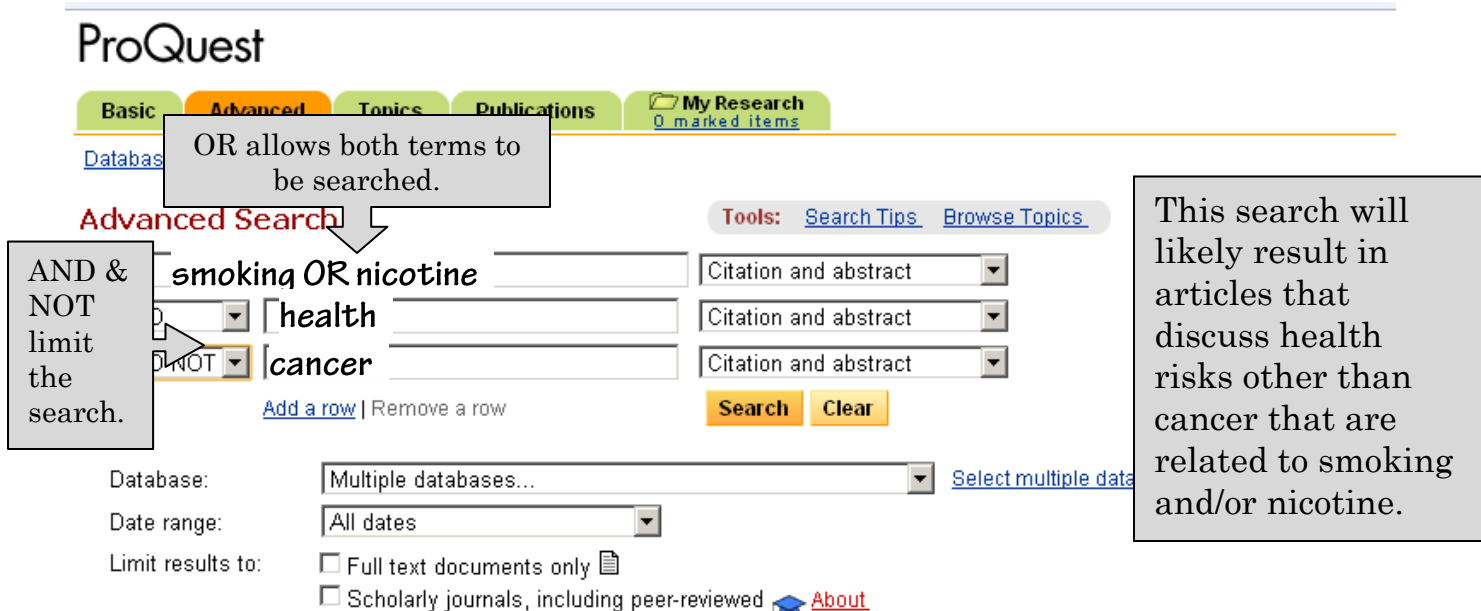
Example: smoking AND health – will likely result in information about how smoking affects health.

OR: Using OR between search terms **broadens** the scope of your search because it allows either or both terms to be present in the results. OR is best used between synonymous or similar terms. The more terms you connect with OR, the more numerous your results will be.

Example: health OR nutrition – will bring up information about health, information about nutrition, and articles about health and nutrition.

NOT: Using NOT between search terms **narrows** the scope of your search by eliminating a term from your results. The more terms you eliminate by using NOT, the narrower your search will become.

Example: smoking NOT cancer – will result in information that discusses smoking without the mention of cancer.



ProQuest

Basic Advanced Topics Publications My Research 0 marked items

Database: Multiple databases... [Select multiple data](#)

Date range: All dates

Limit results to: ☐ Full text documents only ☐ Scholarly journals, including peer-reviewed [About](#)

Advanced Search

Tools: [Search Tips](#) [Browse Topics](#)

AND & NOT limit the search.

OR allows both terms to be searched.

smoking OR nicotine

health

NOT cancer

Add a row | Remove a row

Search Clear

This search will likely result in articles that discuss health risks other than cancer that are related to smoking and/or nicotine.

Phrase Searching

Allows you to search for phrases of 2 or more words, preventing each individual term from being searched separately. Most databases and search engines suggest using quotation marks around groups of words you'd like searched as phrases.

Examples: "health care reform" "Fourth of July" "carbon footprint"

Truncation

Allows you to search for a term and its variations by entering the first few letters of the term followed by a symbol, commonly an asterisk (*). Truncation symbols vary from database to database, so consult the help screen if the asterisk doesn't work.

Example: bicycl* retrieves the terms bicycle, bicycles, bicyclist, bicyclists

**Be careful not to put the symbol too early or too late in the word. It may become ineffective. For example, bicycles* will only retrieve that term, as no other words begin with that string of letters. bi* will retrieve many words unrelated to bicycles, such as biped, bilingual, bite, and binder.

Wildcard characters

Wildcards are used to represent from 1-9 additional characters in a search term. They are useful when you are unsure of a spelling, when there are alternate spellings, or when you only know part of a term. As with truncation symbols, they may vary from database to database.

Commonly, the pound sign (#) represents a single character – exactly one letter.

Example: wom#n will retrieve records containing woman and/or women

The question mark (?) often represents any number of letters.

Example: col?r may retrieve color, colour, colonizer, colorimeter

Child abuse is one term – these two words will not be searched separately

ProQuest

The screenshot shows the ProQuest Advanced Search interface. At the top, there are tabs for "Publications" and "My Research" (0 marked items). Below the tabs, there are links for "Tools: Search Tips" and "Browse Topics". The search area contains three input fields with the following text: "child abuse", "wom#n", and "therap*". Each field has a dropdown menu set to "AND". Below the search fields, there are buttons for "Add row" and "Remove a row". At the bottom, there are checkboxes for "Limit results to: Full text documents only" and "Scholarly journals, including peer-reviewed".

Annotations (grey boxes with arrows pointing to search terms):

- Child abuse is one term – these two words will not be searched separately. (points to "child abuse")
- The terms women and woman are both acceptable as results. (points to "wom#n")
- Therapy, therapist, and therapists will all be found. (points to "therap*")
- This search would likely find articles concerning women and their relationships to both child abuse and therapy. (points to the entire search query)