

Finding Too Many Articles on iCONN? Or Not Enough on OVID? Try This!

When you use databases, you need to tell the computer exactly which topic(s) you are searching for and how to search for them. Unlike commercial search engines such as Google and Yahoo!, databases do not understand searches such as: the nurse's role of educating patients about HIV and/or AIDS.

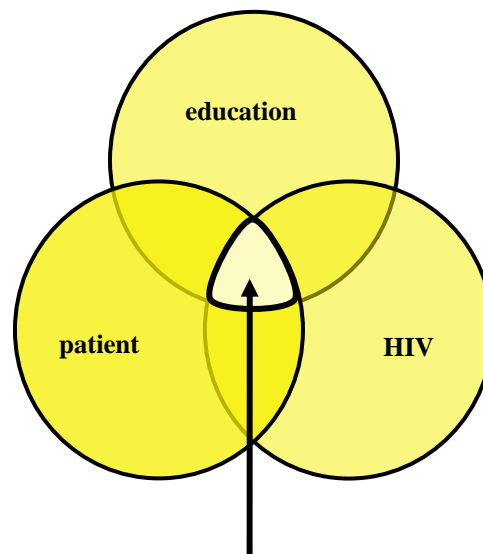
1. Search a database that is relevant to one of the topics: for example, CINAHL (a nursing database) would already be searching through nursing journals so that you can eliminate searching the terms "nurse's role."
2. Use keywords or subject headings to create a search phrase, not a sentence or a question.: an example would be patient AND education AND (HIV OR AIDS). This search phrase uses Boolean search logic as follows.

Boolean Operator: AND

Example: *patient AND education AND HIV*

1. Every time you insert the term AND between two keywords, you narrow your search by telling the computer to find all of keywords in any given article.
2. The more words you string together with AND, the fewer documents you will find.
3. Just remember not to enclose the words in parentheses – as you would do with words strung together by the Boolean operator, OR.

Another approach to learning how to use this Boolean operator is through what's called a Venn Diagram:



Journal articles containing the words
education AND patient AND HIV

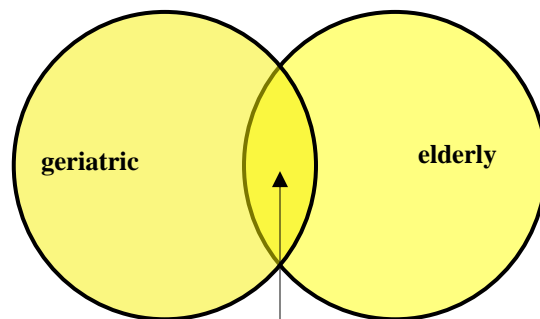
Boolean Operator: OR

Example: *geriatric OR elderly*

1. Every time you insert the term OR between two keywords, you broaden your search by telling the computer to find any of keywords - strung together by the word OR - in any given article. Any or all of the keywords with OR between them might appear in articles gathered from the database or search engine.
2. The more words you string together with OR, the more documents you will find because you are giving the computer a choice of words.
3. Just remember to enclose the words strung together by OR in parentheses when adding a keyword with AND, such as in the following search phrase:

(geriatric OR elderly) AND rehabilitation

Here is what the search, *geriatric OR elderly* would look like as a Venn Diagram:

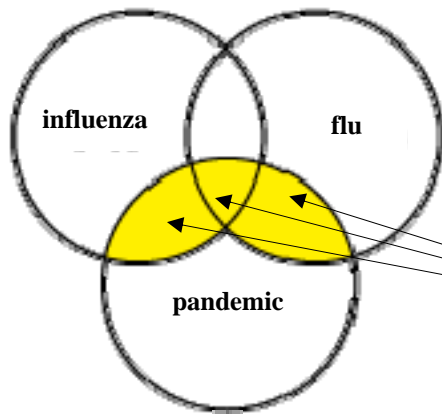


Articles containing both the words geriatric and elderly

Using Parentheses to Express Correct Search Logic

Order of precedence of Boolean operators is: AND, NOT, OR. That is, an AND operation will be performed before an OR operation if both operations are included in a query, unless parentheses are used to override priority of search operators. Expressions in parentheses are processed first:

So in the search phrase: (influenza OR flu) AND pandemic, the statement in parentheses - 'influenza OR flu' - is processed first.

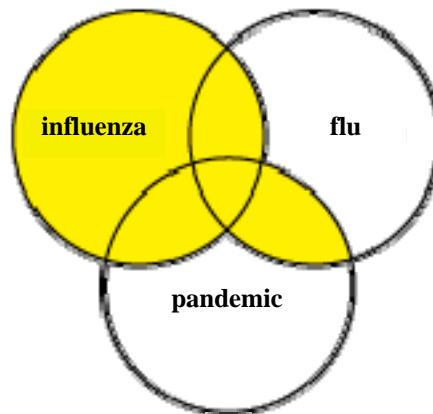


The yellow area shows which words would appear in articles received using this particular search phrase. (pandemic AND flu, pandemic AND influenza, pandemic AND influenza AND flu).

If the parentheses were omitted as follows:

influenza OR flu AND pandemic

The AND operation - 'flu AND pandemic' – would be processed first:



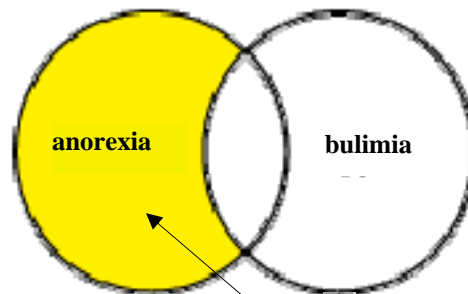
So while you would receive those articles that had both the terms “flu” and “pandemic” in them, you would also receive many articles that mentioned the word influenza (but not necessarily articles about *pandemic* influenza), which would overwhelm you with articles that might or might not be relevant to your topic.

Boolean Operator: NOT

Example: *anorexia NOT bulimia*

1. Every time you use the term NOT, you are telling the database or search engine to ignore those articles that have a specific term in them.
2. The more words you string together with NOT, the fewer documents you will find because you are telling the computer that you do not want articles referring to a certain word.
3. Be very careful when using the term, NOT, because you might be weeding out articles that have a lot of quality information about the topic that you are searching. For example, if you are looking for articles about anorexia and you use the terms, NOT bulimia, you might be missing out on articles about adolescent eating disorders or body image.

Here is what the search, *anorexia NOT bulimia* would look like as a Venn Diagram:



This diagram shows that articles in which only “anorexia” appears would be returned to the searcher. If any article mentions both anorexia AND bulimia, the database or search engine would not return it in the set of relevant resources.

* Don't forget to use the databases' search limitation tools – often found directly below the search box! You can limit the dates of publication, which journal types you wish to search (such as nursing journals) and in which language you might need the article to be written. Contact the College Librarian for tutorials in searching the databases!