

Wildcards

Wildcards are similar to truncation, they substitute a symbol for one letter of a word.

- A wildcard uses a question mark (?) in a search term to represent one or more other characters.
- It's most useful when there are variable spellings for a word, and you want to search for all variants at once.

Examples:

colo?r would return both color and colour

wom?n will match both woman and women

Proximity Searching

Proximity searching allows you to look for strings of words within a given distance of each other. Users can specify how close keywords appear to one another.

- The proximity operators are comprised of a letter (**N** or **W**) and a number (to specify the number of words). The proximity operator is placed between the words that are to be searched.
- Using proximity helps to avoid search results where the words are scattered across a page or a document or unrelated to one another.

Examples:

Near Operator (N)

Type **hydraulic N4 engineering** to find results that would match hydraulic engineering as well as Hydraulic design and engineering.

N4 finds the words if they are within four words of one another regardless of the order in which they appear.

Within Operator (W)

Type **tax W3 reform** to find results that would match tax reform but would not match reform of tax.

W3 finds the words if they are within three words of one another and in the order in which you entered them.

Stop Words

Stop words are not searchable unless they are enclosed in brackets ({}) or double ("") quotation marks. The following common, frequently used words are stop words: as, at, it, be, to, if, in.

- The word "not" is not a stop word, but it is a reserved word. To search for "not" enclose it in brackets: {not}.
- The word "a" is a common word, but not a stop word. To search for a phrase containing a common word, enter the entire phrase as your search. To search for the phrase "one in a million", enter {one in a million}.

GMIT Library



Successful Database Searching

library.gmit.ie



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A Library Database ...

- Is a collection of information **organized** for simple access and searchable by specific fields such as author and title.
- Provides access to archives of **scholarly published** material that are not typically indexed by web search engines.
- Covers a wide **variety of sources** - including newspaper, magazine and journal articles, books, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias.
- Has been professionally **evaluated** and selected for their authoritative and reliable content.

Search Strategies

- Break your topic into concepts (subjects). These concepts will form the building blocks of your search strategy.
- If you are unsure about which search terms to use, start by trying general keywords. Your initial results will help you become familiar with the area and give you ideas for new search terms.
- Consider possible synonyms, alternative terms & spellings, plurals & other endings.
- Expand acronyms: search for 'building information modelling' and 'BIM'.
- Databases provide an Advanced Search option—use it!

Improving Search Results

There are different ways to refine your search so that the maximum search results are returned. In addition to trying the suggestions provided on the Search Screens, you could also try any of the following:

- Try broadening your search to locate terms not only in the citation and abstract but also within the full text of the article. Tick the **"Also search within full text of the article"** – this will expand the search.
- Use the thesaurus expander if available. Tick the **"Also search for related words"** expander, to find synonyms, alternate spellings and plurals for your search terms.
- Try unticking one or more limiters. Limiters narrow your result list—depending upon the limiters you've chosen, you may have created too narrow of a search.

Phrase Searching

Useful for refining and increasing the relevance of a search, phrase searching offers the ability to look for words together in a phrase.

- The most common indicator of a phrase is speech marks ("").

Examples:

"cloud computing"

"business information systems"

Records will only be returned if they contain the words side by side in that exact order.

Boolean Logic

Boolean searching is a way to link your search terms. If done properly, this can result in more precise and efficient searching.

- Requires the use of the Boolean operators AND, OR and NOT.
- Boolean operators are easily used by clicking on the options from drop-down menus on all our databases.
- These searches are not designed to yield significant results if you enter long phrases or questions in everyday English.

Nested Searching

If you are comfortable with Boolean searching, you can create quite complex search queries, combining search terms linked with OR to search terms linked with AND. This is called a nested search.

- In a nested search, put parentheses around the terms linked with OR.

Example:

(teenagers OR adolescents) AND violence AND "video games"

The database will look for any articles containing either "teenagers" or "adolescents" and then combine them with both "violence" and "video games".

Singular vs. Plural Searching

In order to provide the most comprehensive search results, some databases may return results that include both the single and plural versions of your search terms.

- If a singular word is searched, the plural and possessive forms will also be searched. However, if the word is in quotation marks, plural and possessive forms will not be searched.
- When a plural is searched, some databases will automatically search for the singular version of the term.
- If the plural is spelled differently, (e.g. child, children), a search is not expanded unless the "Apply additional terms to query" or "Apply related words" (if available) is checked.

Truncation (*works like expanders*)

Truncation broadens your search to include various word endings and spellings.

- Useful when searching for the singular and plural form of a word.
- To use truncation, enter the root of a word and put the truncation symbol (*asterisk) at the end.
- The results will include any ending of that root word.

Examples:

plagiar* retrieves plagiarism, plagiarist, plagiarize, plagiarizing

genetic* retrieves genetic, genetics, genetically