

Search Techniques

Knowing some search techniques to use in [Library Search](#) and [Library databases](#) will help you focus and refine your search - you can even use them in search engines such as Google!

Linking words: combine your keywords in useful ways

AND	<p>e.g. jam AND toast</p> <p>Search results will only include resources that contain both the word jam and the word toast. A blank space between words also works for AND.</p>
OR	<p>e.g. jam OR preserve OR jelly OR confit</p> <p>Search results will contain resources that include one or more of these terms.</p>
NOT	<p>e.g. Spreads NOT honey</p> <p>Search results will exclude resources that contain the word 'honey'.</p>

Search modifiers: make your keywords work harder

<p>“ ”</p> <p>Speech marks</p>	<p>e.g. "chocolate spread"</p> <p>Phrase searching: search results will only include resources that contain the words 'chocolate' and 'spread' beside each other in a sentence.</p>
<p>*</p> <p>Asterisk</p>	<p>e.g. toast*</p> <p>Truncation: search results will include resources that contain words beginning with 'toast', e.g. toast, toasts, toasted, toasting, toaster.</p>
<p>()</p> <p>Parentheses</p>	<p>e.g. (jam* OR "chocolate spread") AND (toast* OR crumpet*)</p> <p>Use with synonyms: results will include resources that contain either the term jam or chocolate spread or both, and either toast or crumpet or both.</p>
<p>?</p> <p>Question mark</p>	<p>e.g. colo?r</p> <p>Wild card: use to replace one or more characters when you can spell a term several ways. Colo?r will find resources with both 'color' and 'colour'.</p>

Searching tips

- Use **AND** with keywords to narrow and reduce number of results
- Use **OR** with synonyms and related terms to widen and increase the number of results
- Check the database you are using for alternative search tricks
- Use **search fields** to restrict your search within the title, abstract, subject etc.
- Experiment with different combinations to find the best results. If in doubt, keep your search simple.