

## Guide to Searching Techniques

Use the tips in this guide to get the results you want when searching FINDit and within individual databases. You will also find these tips useful when using a search engine.

### Search Strategy

#### Plan ahead

- Form your search strategy before you begin. The more effort you put into your search strategy, the more relevant your search results will be. This will save you time in the long run.

#### Break it down

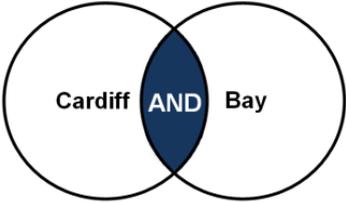
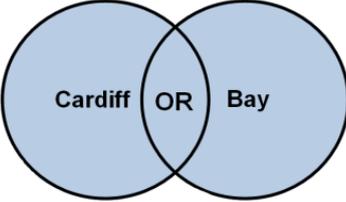
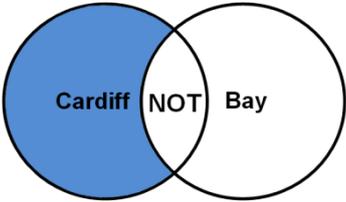
- Do not enter long descriptive phrases or whole essay titles. Be clear about your topic and pick out the important concepts to use as *keywords* in your search.

#### Get to know your subject

- Use subject encyclopaedias and dictionaries to help you clarify your topic and give you ideas for keywords.
- Consider all possible words or phrases that might be used to describe your subject and produce a list of keywords. This may include synonyms and related terms, American terms or spellings, plurals, acronyms and abbreviations.

### Searching Techniques

Boolean Operators **AND**, **OR** and **NOT** can be used in most databases to retrieve relevant information by linking concepts/keywords together.

	Example	The search will find...	Venn diagram results shown in Blue
<b>AND</b>	Cardiff <b>AND</b> Bay	Items containing Cardiff Bay This <b>narrows</b> the search	
<b>OR</b>	Cardiff <b>OR</b> Bay	Items containing either of these. This <b>widens</b> the search	
<b>NOT</b>	Cardiff <b>NOT</b> Bay	Items containing the words Cardiff but <b>not</b> the word bay. Be careful as it may eliminate useful articles.	

<b>Complex Boolean Searches</b>	You can use one or more operators together e.g. (city <b>OR</b> urban <b>OR</b> town) <b>AND</b> regeneration. This will find documents with regeneration and any of the words city, urban or town.
<b>Phrase Queries</b> “ ”	Allows you to search for exact terms by enclosing the search term in quotation marks. This returns documents containing the exact phrase e.g. “architectural conservation”.
<b>Truncation</b> \$	Allows you to search for words that share a common stem by using a specific symbol e.g. comput\$ would search for any word containing the stem <b>comput</b> (e.g computer, computing, computation).
<b>Wildcards</b> *	Replace letters within a word e.g. wom*n would find both woman and women.  Be aware that databases tend to use different symbols for truncation and wildcards, so check the database’s help section before you start.
<b>Proximity Searches</b>	This is a way to search for two or more words that occur within a certain number of words from each other e.g. Salmon near/15 virus  There is a lot of variation between databases in what symbols to use, so check the database’s help section before using proximity searches.
<b>Fielded Searches</b>	Search in a particular field of the document, for example the title, author or publication date. Many databases will let you select available fields to search from a drop-down menu.

## Search Results

- If you have retrieved too many results, think again about how to make your search more specific. Try using different keywords, add additional keywords, or limit your search to particular fields or publication years.
- If your search finds very little, try looking at the index or thesaurus of the database that you are using. This will help you to match keywords and spellings with those used in the database and may give suggestions for broader search terms.
- Use your results to review your search strategy.
- Consider using a wider range of search techniques to broaden or narrow your search results.

## Success

- Once you have your results they can be sent to your email address, printed, or downloaded.
- Where the full-text of an article is not available on FINDit you can request an Inter-library Loan. For more information go to <http://studentlibrary.southwales.ac.uk/interlibrary/>
- Online help is available within most databases.

## Help and Support

If you require more help with your searching techniques, please contact your Information Librarian <http://studentlibrary.southwales.ac.uk/information/librarians/>

## Feedback

If you have any comments or suggestions about this publication please email [libweb@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:libweb@southwales.ac.uk)