Quick Reference Guide: Search Tools

Combining terms - Boolean operators

**AND** - both (or all) terms present

![Diagram showing AND operator]

Type OR terms on one line inside parentheses to keep them grouped together as a single concept.

**OR** - either (or both) terms present

![Diagram showing OR operator]

Do not use the drop down menu OR unless you are ONLY searching OR phrases. If you combine one line with OR and another with AND, the database might not combine the terms as expected.

**NOT** - removes a term

![Diagram showing NOT operator]

You can use the pulldown NOT for a simple NOT search, but using search history is a good option for a more complex search. You can combine lines of search strategy by typing the line numbers and NOT in the search box.

Note: Use NOT with caution! It is easy to inadvertently eliminate relevant results with NOT. Using additional AND concepts to refine a search is often a better strategy than using NOT.
Near Operator (N#): N5 returns results where the words are five or fewer words apart from each other, and they can appear in any order. (N3 finds terms within three, N4 with four, etc.)

Within Operator (W#): W3 finds words that are within three words of each other, but only in the order you typed the terms.

Phrase search - quotation marks around two or more words

Truncation and wildcards

* - unlimited characters at the end or middle of a word
  toxi* = toxic  tox*y = toxicity
  toxicity  toxicology
  toxicities  toxicologically
  toxin  toxigenicity
  toxins  toxicology
  toxicological  toxicglycosides
  toxicokinetics...

You can also use an asterisk (*) between two words to match any single (or no) word
  sensory * analysis =sensory analysis
  sensory descriptive analysis
  sensory-guided analysis
  sensory oriented analysis...

Note: You can also use the wildcard symbol # within a word to capture one or no characters (i.e. colo#r = colour or color), and ? to capture one variable letter in the middle of a word (i.e. ogani?ation for organisation or organisation).

BUT unless your library has shut the function off, you will find that EBSCOhost automatically returns results containing variable spellings plus plurals. You will get results with colour, color, colours and colors no matter which of those words you type. The same is true with organisation, organization, organisations, organzations.

You can override this automatic result expansion by typing a term inside quotation marks, which will direct the database to search only for exactly what you have typed.

Tip: you can also use multiple words with OR on either side of the proximity operator. For example, you could search biodegradable N3 (packaging or film*)