

Boolean Operators

In this video, you will learn how to:

- apply Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT to database searching at UNB Libraries.

Boolean operators are the small but mighty words AND, OR, and NOT that establish the relationships among your search terms when you are searching a database or a library catalogue. You can use *Boolean operators* to narrow or expand your search. These terms save you time by focusing your searches for best results. Let's explore how *Boolean operators* work.

We usually use the word AND when we want to add components. For example, when we order a sandwich, we ask for cheese AND lettuce AND tomatoes AND mayonnaise. This means, the more ANDs, the more there is on our sandwich!

Using AND in a database search, however, has the opposite effect. When you search for something that has one subject AND another, you are linking concepts but narrowing your search results. This narrowing happens because you are asking for results that include both subjects, not just one or the other. Therefore, when you use the word AND, you will end up with fewer results.

A search in UNB WorldCat using the keywords *phones* AND *sleep* returns over 2,000 results. A search using an additional keyword--*phones* AND *television* AND *sleep*--returns only around 200 results. These results are significantly different because they contain not only the first two keywords--*phones* and *sleep*--but also the third keyword *television*.

When you use OR in a search, it expands your results because the search includes one subject OR another OR both. A search using the keywords *phones* OR *television* AND *sleep* returns over 6,000 results. This number is high because the results reflect both *phones* and *sleep* as well as *television* and *sleep*.

Use NOT to exclude terms from your search. When using NOT, always locate it at the end of your search.

If we search *phones* OR *television* AND *sleep* NOT *adults*, we exclude anything that notes adults as a keyword. This reduces the results of the search by more than 1000 items.

You may notice that many databases already have *Boolean operators* built into the search screen to help you establish the relationship among your search terms.

Happy Searching! Perhaps you might want to grab a snack first! I know I need a sandwich.

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