Searching Databases on the EBSCOhost Platform: Advanced Search Techniques

Searchable Fields and Field Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Code</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>All Text</td>
<td>Performs a search of all the database’s searchable fields including every document’s full text.</td>
<td>TX cronyism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Performs a search for all names (and words) in every document’s author field.</td>
<td>AU du bois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TI</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Performs a search of all words in every document’s title field.</td>
<td>TI academy awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SU</td>
<td>Subject Terms</td>
<td>Performs a search of all words in every document’s subject headings field.</td>
<td>SU motion pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Performs a search of all words in every publication’s title field.</td>
<td>SO newsweek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Performs a search for words in a document’s abstract summary.</td>
<td>AB supreme court case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>ISSN</td>
<td>Performs an exact search for a publication’s ISSN number.</td>
<td>IS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most documents in EBSCO databases do not have keywords!

For more searchable fields and field codes, (searchable tags) in Academic Search Premier look [HERE](#).

For more searchable fields and field codes, (searchable tags) in MasterFILE Premier look [HERE](#).
Subject Searching

Of all the searchable fields the subject terms field can be the most powerful. It is underused by most students.

Then find subject terms by browsing.

Boolean Operators

Here is where you find the Boolean operators. For a definition of each, see below.

See below for more information about Boolean operators.
**AND** – combines search terms so that each search result contains all of the terms. For example, *education and technology* finds articles that contain *both terms*.

**OR** – combines search terms so that each search result contains at least one of the terms. For example, *education or technology* finds results that contain *either term*.

**NOT** – excludes terms so that each search result does not contain any of the terms that follow it. For example, *education not technology* finds results that contain the term *education* but not the term *technology*.

### Boolean Operators and Parentheses

Parentheses are important and help to control a search. Parentheses are recommended when using more than two operators. *Without* parentheses, a search is executed using the following two rules simultaneously:

- **AND AND NOT HAVE PRIORITY OVER OR.**
- **FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**

Therefore a search without parentheses that uses **and** and **or** such as:

```
dog OR cat AND show OR parade
```

will actually search:

```
((dog OR cat) AND show) OR parade
```

You will get results that have the word *DOG* and the word *SHOW* (not necessarily together) or the word *CAT* and the word *SHOW* (not necessarily together), but you will also get all documents that contain the word *PARADE* alone. This is not a very accurate or relevant search!

So, there is another important, two-part rule:

**ELEMENTS THAT ARE ENCLOSED IN PARENTHESES ARE EXECUTED FIRST, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT. ELEMENTS INSIDE INNER PARENTHESES ARE EXECUTED FIRST.**
This search, therefore:

(rome AND china) AND (trade OR commerce)

is the same as:

(rome AND china) AND (trade OR commerce)

The result of this search will be documents that have both the word ‘rome’ and the word ‘china’ and the word ‘trade’ or the word ‘commerce’ somewhere in the subject term fields. This is a very precise search and only one document was found. But it was very RELEVANT.
Here’s what NOT to do:

This is really the same as:

(rome) AND (china) AND (trade) OR (commerce)

Which is really the same as:

((rome AND china) AND trade) OR commerce

You’ll find over 6500 documents, but only one will be relevant. (This happens because of the rules previously mentioned.) We get *all* documents with the word ‘commerce’ anywhere in the subject field. That’s a lot of hits, and most of them are not relevant.

**Adding Field Codes**

Here is another way to do this same search:

A different search example:

Notice here we are searching for a phrase using quotation marks. See below.
Phrase Searching

When words are enclosed by double quotation marks, the exact phrase is searched.

Wildcards

? – Use the ? symbol to represent each unknown character. For example:

1. Type ne?t to find all documents containing neat, nest or next. Type wom?n to find woman or women.
2. Type theat?? to find all documents containing theatre or theater.

# - Use the # symbol to represent each or no character. For example:

1. Type colo#r to find all documents containing color or colour.

Truncations

* - Use the * symbol at the end of a word root to find all ending variants. For example:

1. Type immigra* to get immigrant or immigrants or immigration

Choose your Databases, Choose your Subject terms

Searching: Academic Search Premier, MasterFILE Premier, History Reference Center, Religion and Philosophy Collection, Military & Government Collection, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) Show Less | Choose Databases

Notice the wildcards.

Here a very precise subject term was used. It was found by using the ‘subject terms’ search tool found at the top of the search screen.

More EBSCOhost databases have been added to this search, including eBooks.
# Limiting your Search

It’s always wise to limit to ‘full text’ so that all hits made up of ONLY citations or abstracts are avoided.

When using special limiters, be sure to limit in all databases.