How do I know which search terms to use?

The first step is to take a few minutes to brainstorm words that describe your topic. As you brainstorm, you may think of words that didn’t initially come to your mind.

Then combine the words together using Boolean operators, quotation marks, parentheses, and truncation.

1. **Boolean Operators**
   a. **and**  
   Finds both terms  
   b. **Example:**  
   soft skills **and** workplace
   
   c. **or**  
   Finds either term (may find both terms too)  
   d. **Example:**  
   supervisor **or** manager
   
   e. **not**  
   Doesn’t find a term  
   f. **Example:**  
   soft skills **not** millennials

2. **Quotation Marks**
   a. Will search for words right next to each other, and in the same order  
   b. **Examples:**  
   “soft skills”  
   “interpersonal skills”  
   United States

3. **Parentheses**
   a. Use to group searches together so that you can do more than one search at a time  
   b. **Is used the most with the OR Boolean operator**  
   c. **Example:**  
   “soft skills” and (training or education or “professional development”)

4. **Truncation**
   a. Uses a symbol to find the various endings of a word  
   b. **The symbol will vary depending on the database. See the database help features to find out which symbol to use.**  
   c. **Example:**  
   supervis* finds supervisor, supervising, supervisory, supervised

Questions?

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