



## Searching Effectively

Learning to search effectively can make the difference between success and failure. Begin the research process by making a list of terms used to describe your topic. Encyclopedias and indexes of books can be used if you need some help in coming up with terms. The library's electronic databases include current, good quality information on topics of interest. If you are using the web make sure the information provided is current, and from a reliable source. A handout on evaluating websites is [available](#).

These tips will work in the catalog, **most databases**, and internet search engines. In addition, help screens are also available which can assist you if you need more assistance.

**Capitalization and Punctuation**– It doesn't usually matter.

Example: aids or AIDS or Aids will all pull up the same results.

(Note: These results will include teaching aids, the disease and assistance for the disabled)

**Connectors** – AND, OR, and NOT

**OR** – used for alternative spellings, synonyms or abbreviations

Example: doctor, physician, dr., md, or m.d., email, E-mail, or electronic mail

**AND** – Use when you need more than one word to appear in the same document

Example: doctor AND malpractice Aids AND Africa AND disease

**NOT** – Use when you don't want a term included in your results list

Example: technology NOT education NOT television

**Phrases** – Used to find a term composed of several separate words.

Use *quotation marks* "to hold together a phrase.

Example: "sudden infant death syndrome", "war on poverty"

**Root words** – Use the *asterisk* \* to replace word endings.

Example: Comput\* finds any word beginning with the root, including computer, computing, computerized, computers, etc.; bernst\*\*n finds the ie or ei spelling of the name.

**Singular or Plural** – needle or needles May make a difference

Example: for regular words use an *asterisk* \* - needle\* will pull both singular and plural forms of the word. For irregular words use -knife OR knives or used an *asterisk* within the word to indicate a letter is missing such as **wom\*n** for women or woman