

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Using Boolean Operators

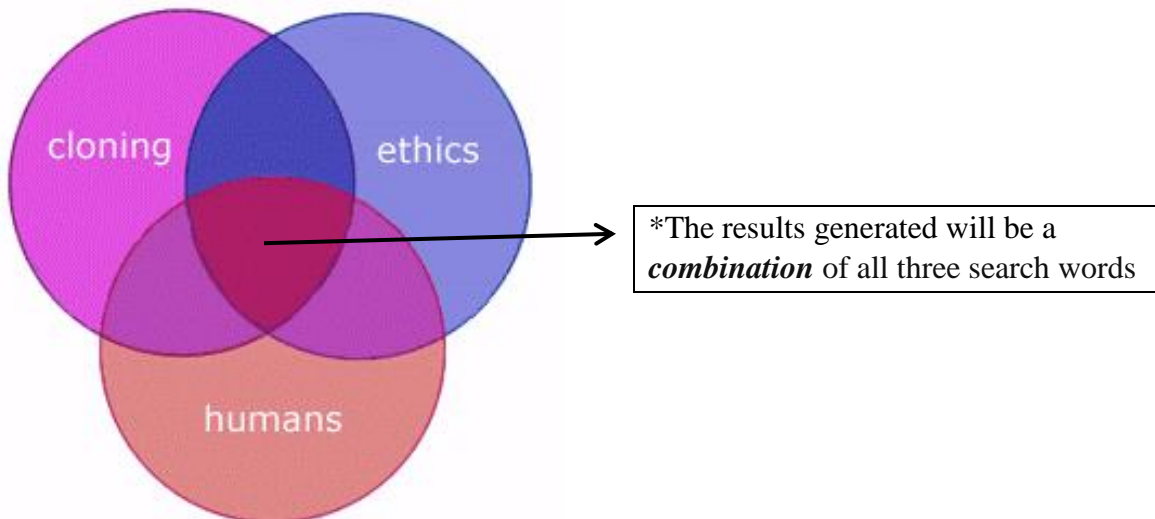
Database commands, or “Boolean operators”, are terms used to define the relationship(s) between keywords in a search. They can combine or exclude keywords in a search, effectively expanding or narrowing your search results. When conducting research, appropriate use of the following operators will save you time and effort by producing more targeted results.

Use **DIRECT QUOTES** (“ ”) to:

- Search words quoted in that **exact** order

Use **AND** to:

- Narrow your search
- Tell the database that **ALL** keywords must be present in the results
- Example: cloning AND humans AND ethics



Use **OR** to:

- Broaden your results
- Tell the database that **ANY** of your keywords can be present in the results
- Example: cloning OR genetics OR reproduction

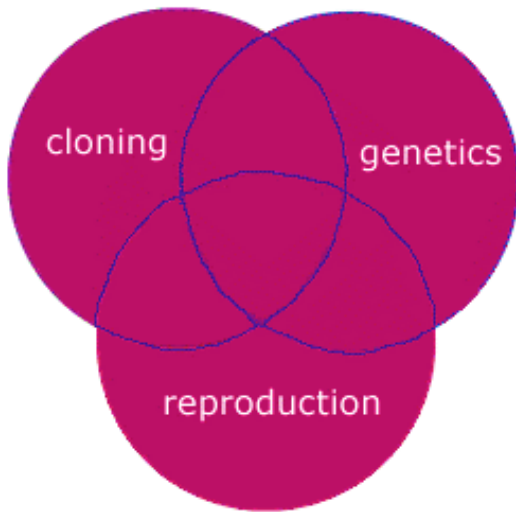
References:

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (n.d.). Database Search Tips: Boolean operators.

Adapted from: <http://libguides.mit.edu/c.php?g=175963&p=1158594>

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*The results generated will represent all three search words or circles

Use **NOT** to:

- Narrow your search by *excluding* words
- Tell the database to ignore concepts that may be associated with your keywords
- Example: cloning NOT sheep

Ordering of Commands:

- Databases usually recognize AND as the primary operator, & will connect concepts with AND together first.
- If you use a combination of AND and OR operators in a search, enclose the words to be "ORed" together in parentheses.

Examples:

- ethics AND (cloning OR reproductive techniques)
- (ethic* OR moral*) AND (bioengineering OR cloning)

Boolean Operators are simple words (AND, OR, NOT or AND NOT) used as conjunctions to combine or exclude keywords in a search, resulting in more focused and productive results.

References:

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (n.d.). Database Search Tips: Boolean operators.

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