How do I find the information I'm looking for? – Education

Using Boolean operators

When you have decided on the most suitable keywords for your research there are simple techniques known as boolean operators that you can use to aid your search. These techniques are universal which means you can use them on nearly all electronic databases.

The most common Boolean Operators are AND, OR and NOT. These can be used to link your keywords together when you enter them into a database.

AND is easily the most popular of Boolean operators. AND narrows the search, reducing the number of articles you get in your results.

e.g. literacy AND assessment
       children AND language

OR expands the search to achieve more results.

e.g. child OR youth
       mathematics OR maths

NOT will narrow the search to reduce the number of results by excluding certain terms. If you are using an unspecific term then this can be useful.

e.g. media NOT television
More tips and tricks
Here are some other tricks of the trade to help your search strategy:

Searching for a phrase
Always use quotation marks
e.g. “early years workers”

Truncation
Truncation allows you to broaden your search results and find variations of a word. The asterisk takes the place of any number of letters of the alphabet and is added to the stem of the word. E.g. psycholog* will find:

- Psychology
- Psychologist
- Psychological
- Psychologically
- Psychologistically

Wildcards
A wildcard takes the place of any letter of the alphabet and can be inserted anywhere in a word. Wildcards can be used to distinguish between international variations in spelling. For example, in the United States ‘z’ is often favoured instead of ‘s’.

- e.g. organi*ation searches for organisation and organization, p*diatric searches for paediatric and pediatric.