

# ADLL/EDLE Doctoral Cohorts

## Research Tips

### 1

#### Not all information is created equal

Consider carefully the types of information you may need to find or use during your research:

- Peer-review refers to journal articles that have undergone the peer-review process. Not all peer-reviewed articles are research!
- Research articles are journal articles presenting original research. Look for clues in the article abstract like information on study size, methodology, or results to help you determine if the article is original research.
- Web resources must be very carefully evaluated for content and authority, and are not appropriate resources for most academic work.

### 2

#### Use the right tools

Databases might not be as intuitive or easy to use as we'd like them to be, but they are the best tools for academic level research. Keep the following tips in mind to make your database searching easier and faster:

- Start with a manageable topic. Your research project will be very targeted and specific; no other articles will cover all of the same variables you do!
- There are many databases to choose from. Each has something unique to offer. Try your searches in multiple databases to get the best results.
- Practice makes perfect!
- Ask for help when you need it; there's no need to struggle alone.

### 3

#### Create strong search statements

Consider the following when creating your search statements:

- Strong search statements start with strong keywords. Brainstorm a list of terms that are related to each of your main ideas. Synonyms, related terms, narrower terms, and broader terms are all good things to think about when creating lists of keywords.
- Use database searching techniques such Boolean operators, truncation, and subject heading searches to make the most out of each and every search.
- Search statements are always a work in progress; refine them as you go to get the best results.

### 4

#### Use the resources available to you

You are not alone in this process:

- Use the ADLL/EDLE Doctoral Cohorts LibGuide on the Libraries website to find links to databases, tips on citing sources, and more. Find the guide online at [http://uark.libguides.com/ADLL\\_EDLE](http://uark.libguides.com/ADLL_EDLE)
- The Education Librarian (Laura Cameron) is available for research consultations in person, over the phone, or via email. She can meet in the evenings or on weekends as needed.

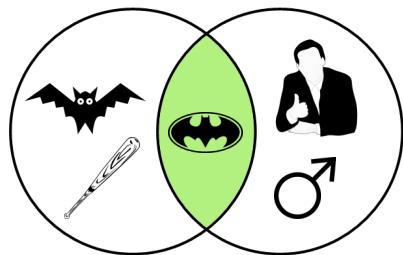
Laura Cameron

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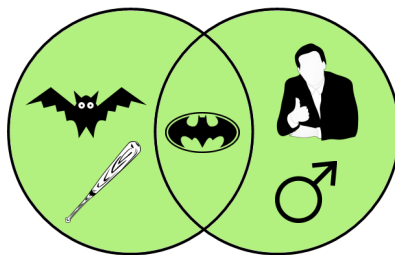
## Boolean Operators

Boolean operators are short, simple words that connect your search terms. These operators (AND, OR, NOT) are used to construct search statements which tell the database what results you want to see. See the diagrams below to learn about how each Boolean operator works.



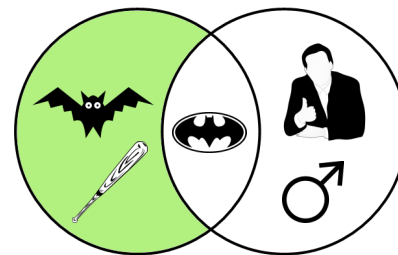
**bat AND man**

- AND limits to results with both of the connected keywords
- Use AND to *narrow* your search and return fewer results



**bat OR man**

- OR limits to results which contain either of the connected terms
- Use OR to *broaden* your search and return more results



**bat NOT man**

- NOT limits to results which contain the first term but exclude the second, connected term
- Use NOT to *narrow* your search and return fewer results

## Phrase Searching



- Use quotation marks to group two or more words together
- Phrase searching ensures that the words inside the quotes will be found in your results exactly as you wrote them
- Examples:
  - “action research”
  - “reading comprehension”

## Limiters



- Limiters can be used to *narrow* your search results
- *Full Text* will limit your results to items you can read in full, online
- *Peer-Reviewed* or *Scholarly* will limit your results to academic journal articles
- *Date* limiters can help you narrow your results by publication date

## Truncation and Wildcards



- Truncation substitutes a symbol, usually an asterisk (\*), for any ending of a root word
- Example:
  - econom\** = economic, economy, economize, economist, etc.
- Wildcards are symbols, usually a question mark (?), substituted for one character in a word
- Example:
  - ma?e* = mace, made, male, etc.

## Subject Headings (aka Descriptors)

- Databases organize their content in part by tagging articles with words or phrases that describe the main content of the article. These words or phrases are called “subject headings” or “descriptors.”
- Each database has a unique list of subject headings or descriptors, and the words or phrases on that list are the only ones that can be used to tag the article.
- Identifying subject headings or descriptors that are commonly assigned to articles about topics you’re interested in can provide you with another avenue for lucrative searching.
- Look for a thesaurus or term list in each database for help discovering what words or phrases are used as subject headings or descriptors.