**Literature Retrieval Techniques**

**Step 1:** Summarize your search topic briefly.

**Step 2:** Highlight the main concepts of your topic.

  e.g. What is the relationship between multicultural education and assessment in higher education?

**Step 3:** Develop a list of search terms and their synonyms using your knowledge of the topic and “controlled vocabulary” found in the Thesauri of ERIC and Education Research Complete.

**Step 4:** Connect search together using **Boolean Operators** to complete your search strategy. Synonyms or similar terms should be joined using **OR** and surrounded by parentheses ( ). Other key terms should be joined by **AND**.

Databases have varying features for searching: **keyword, descriptors, subject terms; Boolean Operators, and truncation, wildcards.**

**Boolean Operators = Combining Concepts**

Use Boolean operators (AND, OR) to combine concepts or words. The Boolean Operators AND | OR are best explained by the Venn diagrams below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AND</th>
<th>OR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Venn Diagram AND" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Venn Diagram OR" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Searches for documents that contain two (or more) words/phrases. This **narrows** your search results. Shaded area represents documents found.

Searches for documents that contain any or all of the words/phrases. Used to combine synonyms or related terms (saves having to do separate searches). This **broadens** your search results. Shaded area represents documents found.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example: assessment AND multicultural education</th>
<th>Example: assessment OR evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note: by using parenthesis, you can use OR and AND at the same time. Example 1: (assessment OR evaluation) AND multicultural education</td>
<td>Note: by using parenthesis, you can use OR and AND at the same time. Example 2: (assessment OR evaluation) OR multicultural education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Truncation (think of “truncating” a term)**

Truncation is a way to search for all variations of a word by adding a symbol at the end, beginning, or within the word. This is helpful when searching the singular and plural forms in the same search. In both the Library Catalog and many Library Databases, words can be truncated by using an asterisk (*) to look for characters after a **word stem**. Please note that the truncation symbol varies in databases. ERIC, Education Research Complete and PsychInfo use * for truncation.

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Examples:
fingerprint* (Retrieve fingerprinting, fingerprints)
environ* (Retrieves environment, environmental, environmentalist, environmentalism)
wom*n (Retrieves women, woman)

Searching Tips for ERIC and Education Research Complete (ERC) these transferable skills are applicable to most databases

- Use the ERIC/ERC database when searching for educational topics written in the professional literature.
- ERIC uses controlled vocabulary for education-related terms called Descriptors that are maintained in the Thesaurus. Use the Thesaurus to look-up search terms and to find synonyms. Using Descriptors in your search can help in retrieving more precise search results.
- You can combine different search sets using Boolean Operators (AND | OR) and using the set #s. For example: (S1 AND S2)
- Refine your Results (hint: do this as the final step of your search). You may refine/limit your search to material type, intended audience, publication type, peer-reviewed, specific dates, full text, etc.
- Create an EbscoHost Personal Account and use this account to store your search results. You can store citations and searches that you are interested in and then, print, email, save or export the information at your convenience.

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