Tips and Tricks for Your Search

No results with your search query?

A few words or names are often sufficient!
Enter just one or a few terms or names from the title. This way, you also reduce the risk of spelling mistakes.

Spelling correct?
Use the placeholder * (asterisk) for certain characters. This will avoid excluding results due to spelling variations.

Example: Keyword “thermodynamics”
The OPAC will deliver results for both: „thermodynamics“ as well as „thermodynamical“

Example: „colo?r“ receives results for both: „colour“ und „color“

Use ? as a placeholder within a word and * as placeholder at the beginning or end of a word.
? correlates to one/no character, * to multiple/none.

Too many or too few results?
Combine search fields with logical operators, called “Boolean Operators”.

„and“ = All entered terms must apply to possible hits

„or“ = At least one of the search terms has to apply to the search results

„and not“ = The second term is excluded and will not appear in any of the hits

Note: Usually, search terms are automatically combined with “and”. To broaden your search results, you have to enter the Boolean Operator “or”.

Phrase search
If you search for a term consisting out of several words, put these words in quotation marks, e.g. “The green book”. You will only receive results with words in that exact order. This also works for Google!

Use literature you have already found
You found a paper or book suitable for your topic? Look into its corresponding reference list to find more literature that might interest you (snowball method).
Too many results?
Restrict your search concerning the subject:

- Add another search term that narrows your topic and connect them with Boolean Operators
- Choose a subtopic

Restrict your search concerning formal criteria (Note: Thereby you might lose relevant material):

E.g.:

- Only items in languages you understand
- Only items from the last five years
- Only books or journal articles (in the OPACplus)
- Only e-media

Too little results?

- Use more general search terms or a superordinate concept
- Enter fewer search terms into the search fields
- Delete your search restrictions
- Search other terms (synonyms, translations)
- Consider whether other catalogues or databases might suit your query better (e.g. specialized databases for searching journal articles or the OPACplus for a broad selection of e-media)

For additional advice on research, use our e-tutorials …

- How to find titles on a reference list
- How to find databases relevant for my subject
- How to develop a search strategy for databases

… or take part in one of our courses on research!

- Information Literacy 1 - Search and Find E-Books and E-Journals
- Information Literacy 2 - Research Strategies for Seminar Papers and Theses

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