

Tips and Tricks for Your Search

You did not get any results when searching the Online Catalogue (OPAC) or a database? The following tips and tricks will enable you to adapt your search. They work in most different catalogues and databases.

Less is more

Enter only a few but concise terms or author names. This way, you also reduce the risk of spelling mistakes.

Spelling correct?

Use a placeholder if the spelling is not clear. This approach is called **truncation**. It will avoid an error message or a lower number of results and includes spelling variations. No results could also mean that the spelling of the term is not correct.

- **Placeholder 1 = * (Asterisk)**

- Works in the beginning or at the end of a word
- Replaces several/ no characters
- Example: keyword "therodynami*"
 - ➔ Results e.g. for "thermodynamics" as well as for "thermodynamically"
 - ➔ Also spelling variations from different languages are included

- **Placeholder 2 = ?**

- Work within a word
- Replaces one/no character
- Example: "colo?r"
 - ➔ Finds "colour" and "color"

- **Further placeholders**

There often are further helpful placeholders etc for the specific databases. A look at the respective help area of the database is worthwhile!

Phrase Search

If you search for a term consisting of several words, put these words in quotation marks, e.g. "United States of America" or "social networks". This also works for Google!

Linking search terms correctly

Link the individual search fields with logical operators called "Boolean Operators".

Operator	Usage
AND	All entered terms must apply to possible search results
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

Beware! Usually search terms are linked with "and" by default. If you want to increase your results list by "or", you must enter this explicitly.

Too many results?

- Restrict your search concerning the subject:
 - Add another search term that narrows your concept
 - Choose a subtopic
- Restrict your search concerning formal criteria (Note: Thereby you might lose relevant items):
 - Only items in languages you understand
 - Only items from the last ten years
 - Only books – only journal articles
 - Only E-Media

Too little results?

- Search other terms (synonyms, translations).
 - Use more general search terms or a superordinate concept.
 - Search the index and thesauri for appropriate search terms. The most appropriate search term might vary from database to database
 - Enter fewer search terms into the search fields.
- Delete your search restrictions.
- Consider whether other catalogues or databases might suit your query better (e.g. Gateway Bayern for collections of other scientific libraries, specialised databases for searching journal articles)

For additional advice on searching for literature, use our e-tutorials...

- [How to find titles on a reference list](#)
- [How to find databases relevant for my subject](#)
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