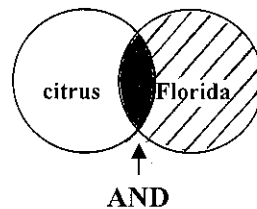


Creating Effective Searches

Boolean searches:

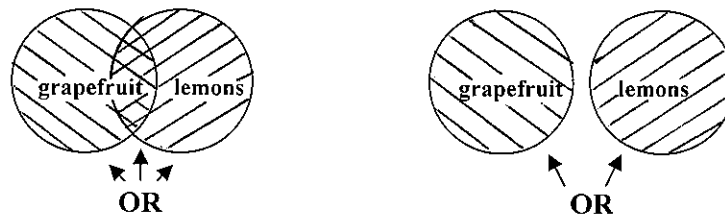
Most databases have an “advanced” search mode that allows Boolean searching. This technique is a great asset for searching but must be used in the correct manner. There are three types of Boolean commands:

AND This command combines two or more *different* concepts and is used to **focus** a search. To be retrieved in the final search results the retrieved records must contain *all* of the concepts.



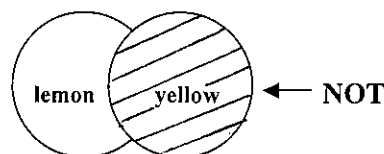
In the example above, items retrieved in the search must discuss both concepts: citrus and Florida. If citrus is mentioned but Florida is not listed, it will not be included. Or, if Florida is discussed but citrus is not mentioned, the item will also not be included in the search results.

OR This command is used with *related or synonymous* concepts and is used to **expand** a search. To be retrieved in the final search results the retrieved records may contain *any or all* of the concepts.



In this case lemons and grapefruit are considered to be related because they are both types of citrus. When using the Boolean OR command, the final results will yield articles that talk about grapefruit and lemons, items that discuss just grapefruit, or items that talk about just lemons.

NOT This command *removes* a concept from a search. This will narrow a search but should be used with caution since it may remove relevant materials along with the unwanted record.



The NOT command removes unwanted material. If your search is retrieving articles on the color “lemon yellow” that have nothing to do with the fruit, you might want to remove the term “yellow” from your search. This may be an advantage but remember that it will also remove any items that discuss lemons (the fruit) that are described as yellow in color.

Limiting to the subject (descriptor) field:

Databases provide indexing to books, articles, and other items so that they may be easily located by a researcher. Indexers only assign a subject heading to an item if that topic has significant coverage within the book, article, or document. If one indexer assigned a subject of “citrus” to an item and a different indexer used the term “fruit” to describe the same item, the researcher would have to think up all of the possible topics that may have been considered in order to perform a comprehensive search. To avoid this problem and to provide consistency across a database, the indexers use a controlled vocabulary to select appropriate subject headings for each item. In many cases, you can find a listing of the controlled vocabulary terms in a thesaurus that is related to the database that you are using. Sometimes these are available online along with the database. With other databases, the thesaurus is a printed volume. Ask the librarian for assistance if you need help locating the thesaurus.

Using the authorized subject terms from the thesaurus in your search will help you to focus your research to items where that concept is emphasized and not just mentioned in a peripheral manner. The thesaurus is also a useful tool to use in refining your search since it often provides narrower, broader, and related terms that you may not have considered that can help you to expand or focus your search.

The *Library of Congress Subject Headings* lists the controlled vocabulary for books that are cataloged in the Poynter Library. An entry for “citrus” would look like this:

		Citrus (may Subd Geog)	
		[QK495.R98 (Botany)]	← Library of Congress call number
		[SB369-SB370 (Culture)]	
Scope Note: explains How the term was used	→	Here are entered works on citrus plants. Works on The edible fruits of citrus plants are entered under Citrus fruits	
		UF Citrus fruit trees	← UF (Used For) shows what terms are <i>not</i> included in the controlled vocabulary – use the term “citrus” instead
		Citrus trees	
BT (Broader terms) may be used to expand your search	→	BT Rutaceae	
		NT Citron	
		Citrus natsudaikai	
		Citrus sudachi	
		Grapefruit	← NT (Narrower terms) may help to focus your search
		Lemon	
		Limes	

Once you have selected appropriate subjects for your research, the items should be entered into the subject (sometimes called a descriptor) field in the advanced search screen. When combined with Boolean search operators you can now perform a focused and efficient search.

Example of an advanced search screen using controlled vocabulary and Boolean operators:

Be sure to select the subject or descriptor field from the pull-down menu	<input type="text" value="Subject"/>	<input type="text" value="grapefruit or lemon or limes."/>
		● AND ○ OR ○ NOT
	<input type="text" value="Subject"/>	<input type="text" value="Florida"/>
	<input type="button" value="SUBMIT"/>	