Tips for advanced searches

Searching for online information is easy. However, finding a manageable number of good-quality, relevant results can be more difficult. Use these tips to help you plan and refine your searches, and ensure that you get the best results for your work.

Start by thinking about the **topic** of your research, identifying **search terms (keywords)**, and similar words (**synonyms**). In the following example, the topic of the search is „space".

Topic	Space
Keyword	Universe
Synonyms	Outer space, deep space, cosmos, celestial space
Related words	Solar system, galaxies, telescope, Shuttle, star, nebula, observatory, stratosphere...
Acronym	NASA = National Aeronautics and Space Administration ISS = International Space Station
Abbreviations	temp (temperature), ly (light-year)
Variant spelling (UK/US)	Defence/defense
Vernacular expressions	Higgs boson or Higgs particle is colloquially called the *"God particle"*
Hyphens	extra terrestrial, extra-terrestrial
Capitals	Big bang, Big Bang

You now have a wide selection of words to use in your online searches. Use these words with the following search techniques to help you find results:

- **To search for a phrase:**

  Enclose a phrase with **double quotation marks** to search for the exact phrase instead of individual words.

  For example: "Milky Way" and "Big Bang"

- **To connect and define the relationship between your search terms:**

   Use the so called Boolean operators **AND, OR, NOT**

> **Use AND to narrow your search:**
>
> "Saturn" AND "Mars"   Returns results where both of your search terms appear.

> **Use OR to broaden your search**
>
> "Aurora Borealis" OR "Northern Lights"   Returns results where either of your search terms appear.

> **Use NOT to exclude a word or phrase from your search**
>
> "Comet" NOT "Meteor"   Returns results where only the first term appears excluding the second one.

- **To retrieve variations of the ending of a word**

   Use an **asterisk**

   For example: planet* will find planet, planets, planetary

- **To retrieve variations of spellings of a word**

   Use a **question mark** to find any letter in that position

   For example: organi?ation will find both organi**s**ation (UK) and organi**z**ation (US)

These search techniques work for many online search tools, including Discover. Some databases have even more specialised searching tools. You can find out more about them in the Help section of each database.