

How to Get the Best Search Results

Choosing the Right Words

When you begin the research process, you should start by breaking down your topic and finding the best search terms or “keywords.” By using the right keywords, you will get the best results and save yourself a lot of time.

Keywords help focus your search to what you are actually looking for. Instead of typing “*What are the current issues with right to privacy and national security?*” in the search box, try: “*right to privacy*” **AND** “*national security*”

By cutting out the bulk of the phrase, you will find that you get more relevant and useful results.

Keep in mind, quotation marks can help keep your search terms together.

Boolean Operators

This funny term is used to describe words in a search that combine terms to get the best results.

There are three Boolean operators – **AND**, **OR** and **NOT**.

AND helps narrow your search.

Example: “right to privacy” **AND** “national security”

By adding **AND**, I am telling the search engine to search for “rights to privacy” in connection with “national security.” If I did not put the **AND** into my search box, I will likely get a lot of results that only deal with one of my keyword phrases, not both together.

OR helps broaden your search. We tell the search that we will accept both possibilities in our search results.

Example: “national security” **OR** “NSA”

NOT can help make your search more precise. If a result that is different than what you intended keeps dominating your search results, you can use **NOT** to remove it.

Example: “national security” **NOT** “NSA”

