



When searching for information think about the keywords or phrases that describe your topic and search for them to find the information you need. Typing a sentence explaining your topic will most likely retrieve results of little or no relevance.

Define your topic and identify the main concepts and related keywords

Let's imagine your topic was 'Email is a popular form of communication, but how secure is it?'
We can break this topic down into two main concepts:

Concept 1 email
Concept 2 security

Next, think of similar words (synonyms) or related words that describe your main concepts. Remember to include plurals and alternative spellings. Keywords for this topic could include:

Concept 1 email, electronic mail
Concept 2 security, privacy, spam

Now we've identified our keywords, we're ready to search! For more help with identifying keywords, please see the [Think. Plan. Discover. Why keywords matter](#) video.

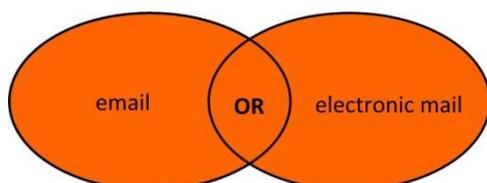
Connect your keywords

Once you've decided on your keywords, you need to connect them together using what are called **connectors** or "Boolean operators". How you connect your search terms together can make a big difference to your results.

There are three main connectors that are used when searching. These are **OR**, **AND** and **NOT**.

Using OR

Your search will find items containing either one or both of your keywords. Use **OR** to search for words with similar meanings.

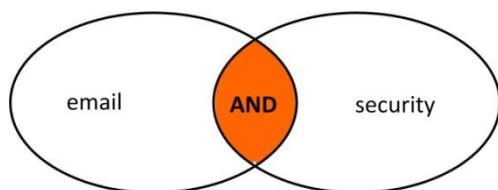


This search will find items that contain the keyword *email*, or the keyword *electronic mail*, or both terms. Connecting your search terms with **OR** will broaden it and will retrieve more items. You get "more with **OR**".



Using AND

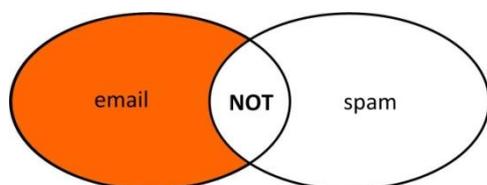
Your search will only find items containing both of your keywords. Use **AND** to combine different concepts that you want to bring together.



This search will find items that contain both the keyword *email* and the keyword *security* in the same item. Connecting your search terms with **AND** will make your search more specific.

Using NOT

Your search will find items containing the first of your keywords but not the other. Use **NOT** when you want to exclude known irrelevant concepts from your search results.



This search will find items that contain the keyword *email*, but will exclude any that also contain the keyword *spam*. Connecting your search terms with **NOT** will narrow your search and retrieve fewer results.

Be cautious using **NOT** however, as you may exclude potentially useful results.

Searching databases

In many databases you can select the connector you want from a drop down box. Use more than one connector to build more complex searches.

Other databases allow you to type these connectors into a single search box. You can connect search terms using different connectors in the same search line, but you need to use **round brackets / parentheses ()** to indicate which search terms should be processed first.

The round brackets tell the database to first search for all the items which contain either *email* or *electronic mail* and then retrieve only those articles from the first search which also include the term *security*.

Use the Search Tips or Help available in each database to ensure you are entering your search terms correctly.

For further information about Library resources and services visit: www.library.unisa.edu.au/

