

# Searching Tips

## Search Fields:

**Keyword Searching** – very broad search. It searches for your words in the title, subject, contents, and abstract. This is a good place to start.

**Subject Searching** (aka descriptors) – offers a more focused search.

- It searches for your words in the subject field only.
- It focuses on the **main topic** or **subject** of the item.
- \*You must use the standardized subject terms of the database you are using. Check the database's thesaurus to locate correct terminology.

**Title Searching** – searches for your words in the title field only. For some databases you must know the exact title of the book or journal article... and your spelling **must** be correct.

**Author Searching** – searches for your words in the author field only.

- Must know the exact name of the author.
- Enter last name first!
- If performing an author search, be aware that authors occasionally publish under various forms of their name (eg. Smith, JA; Smith, J; Smith, John A; Smith, J. Aaron; etc.). It is best to search using last name with just the first initial.

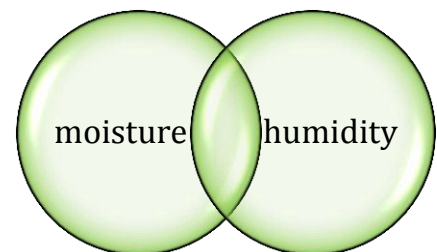
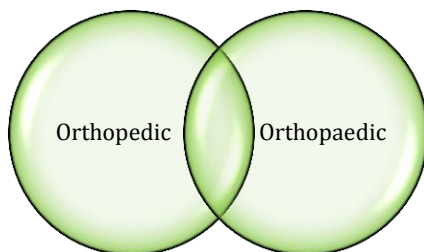
# Setting up a Search:

- To develop your search:
  - Using your thesis statement or PICO statement, identify the key concepts contained in the statement.
  - Determine alternative terms for these concepts, if needed (alternate spellings of words, synonyms, etc).
  - Enter the search terms in the subject appropriate database
- **Search Tip:** You might find it easier to manipulate or revise a search if all search terms are entered separately at first, then combined using Boolean operators.
- **Truncation or Wildcard.** Use an asterisk \* to search for multiple endings of a word. (therap\* will find therapeutics, therapy, therapies, therapist, etc). Make sure to include enough letters before the asterisk to make your search specific.
- **Exact Phrase** – use quotation marks “ ” to search for your terms as a phrase. This will narrow your search. *Example:* “infection control” or “nosocomial infections”
- Begin with a keyword search. Find an article that looks good and look at the subject headings or descriptors listed in the record. Then, redo your search using the relevant subject headings that were assigned to the “good” article.

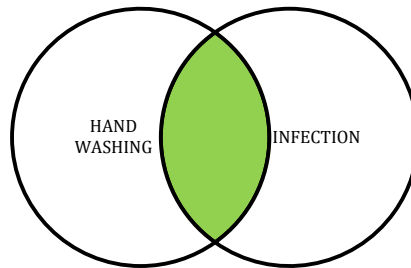
## Using Boolean Operators: AND, OR, NOT

**OR** – Broadens a search by finding items with either of the words. (This is a good method to use to capture synonyms or alternative spellings)

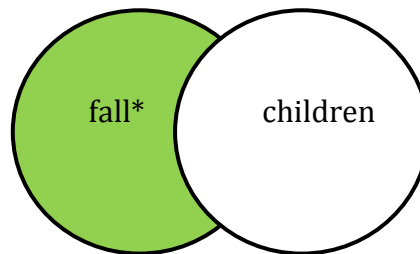
*Example:* moisture OR humidity / orthopedic OR orthopaedic - will retrieve articles with either of the terms



**AND** – Narrows a search. AND retrieves articles containing both of the words.  
*Example:* handwashing AND infection will both appear in the article



**NOT** – Retrieves items excluding a designated word  
*Example:* fall\* NOT children – retrieves articles about falls but excludes those with the term children



## Internet Search Techniques (Google):

- + Use a plus sign to search a word exactly as typed, this search will exclude synonyms
- Use a minus sign to exclude a word.  
*Example:* +heat -miami will retrieve websites with the word heat and exclude websites that have Miami Heat.
- ~ Use the tilde to search for synonyms  
*Example:* ~humidity will retrieve websites with humidity and other sites with synonyms such as moisture