

Keywords and Boolean Operators

Goal: This Directed Learning Activity is intended to introduce you to researching using keywords and Boolean Operators, and will help you become familiar with terms, definitions and applications of the concepts surrounding the topic.

Activities: This portion of the Directed Learning Activity is meant to be done independently. This portion will include activities such as exercises, games, power point presentations, and/or other lessons that show applications of the topic. You should print all materials used and take notes on anything you learn in this Directed Learning Activity.

1. Most of us have had to use a library before, at least for printing out homework or for napping, but when it comes to actually finding helpful information on a subject, where do you begin? A professor tells you that you have to find two books on your research topic, three peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles to prove your research, or five periodicals on a certain subject. It can seem like a daunting task to actually figure out what they're asking you and then to find the information you need. The best place to start is with understanding keywords and Boolean Operators. Both of these things will help you approach a research project with more peace of mind and confidence that you know what you're doing.
2. Keywords and Boolean Operators will help you whenever you search a library book catalog, journal database, or Internet search engine (like Google). The most straightforward way to learn about keywords is to do a search of the Crafton Hills College Library catalog for books on your subject. Access the CHC Library book catalog from home or school by following this link: <http://lib.sbccd.cc.ca.us/search>
3. Now, **you need to have a topic or thesis statement in mind in order to do a keyword search.** For this activity, you will either use your own thesis statement and write it in the blank below or choose one of the following statements. You do not have to agree with the thesis statement you choose; consider it a jumping off point for your research.
 - a. The television industry is the most powerful industry in history.
 - b. Video games have negatively affected youths in the United States of America.
 - c. The health care policies in the U.S. should not be changed.
 - d. _____

4. **Now you will choose the keywords of your research topic or thesis statement.** For instance, in the following thesis statement, I will underline the keywords to be used for conducting my research.

Smoking cigarettes has physiological and psychological effects.

In the sentence, I have underlined what I believe to be the best keywords to begin my research. **In the statement you have chosen, underline what you believe are the best keywords for your research.** This can be a subjective task, but here are a few things to remember:

- Words that don't have anything to do with the topic of your research are not likely to benefit you yet. They may, however, be a useful tool as we move forward in conducting our research.
- You will not need to use punctuation at this level, but certain punctuation marks may be useful later in conducting research.
- If one word is already implied in another word, you may be able to leave it out. For example, in the sentence I chose, I did not underline the word "smoking" because I thought it might be implied in the word "cigarettes." However, if I find in my initial search that much of the information made available to me does not have to do with smoking but only has to do with cigarettes more generally, I may decide to use the more specific word "smoking" in my next search.

Write the words you underlined in the following boxes. (You may have more than three. Just fit them in under the boxes).

and

and

5. Now that you have some keywords to start with, it's important to understand the concept of Boolean Operators. **The phrase "Boolean Operators" is just a fancy term for the words "AND," "OR," and "NOT."** You can use "and," "or," and "not" to connect your keywords and either expand or limit your searching. For this activity, watch the following video explaining how Boolean Operators work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tm-sDKCnO4&feature=related>

After watching the video, answer the following questions:

Which Boolean Operator is best for *narrowing* your search?

Which operator is best for **expanding** your search?

Which operator is best for **excluding** terms from your search?

6. Rewrite the keywords from the boxes above with a Boolean Operator that you want to use in your search on the line below. For example, I want my search to be **narrow** and to include **all** of my keywords. So, my line would read "Cigarettes and physiological and psychological effects."

7. Now you can use your keywords and knowledge of Boolean Operators to effectively search the Crafton Hills Library book catalog. After following the link to the book catalog listed above, choose to search the catalog by subject. Enter your keywords and Boolean Operators in the search box. Record three of the sources you find on the lines provided. Make sure to record the title, author's name, location (Crafton Hills or SBVC), and the call number.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Review: With a tutor at the writing center, discuss specific terms, their definitions, and all of the examples you have written. Make sure to be clear about your understanding of the definitions, and the examples you have given. Clarity will be gauged by your use of specific terms you learned during the Activities portion of this Directed Learning Activity. **In order to pass this Directed Learning Activity, you will need to show your chosen topic/thesis statement and keywords to a tutor at the writing center. You will also need to answer the three questions about Boolean Operators and show the tutor your three sources, explaining how you used your keywords and Boolean Operators to find those sources.**