

*Note: This document was created by omitting, paraphrasing, and including verbatim passages from the ProQuest website.*

[https://search.proquest.com/help/academic/webframe.html?Search\\_Tips.html#Search\\_Tips.html](https://search.proquest.com/help/academic/webframe.html?Search_Tips.html#Search_Tips.html). The document is to be used for instructional purposes only.

## Basics

- Search terms can include **any letters or numbers...** in **English, or any other language**.
- ProQuest ignores **punctuation** and **diacritical marks**.
- ProQuest will search all terms including articles and prepositions. For example: If you search for 'cat in the hat,' ProQuest will search for 'cat **AND** in **AND** the **AND** hat.'

## Tips

- **Special Characters / Commands.** If you use them with any other intent, your search is unlikely to retrieve what you expected.
- **Greater than (>) and less than (<)** symbols are reserved for date searching
- **Brackets and parentheses** are used to build 'nested' queries. For example:  
cow AND (dog OR cat).
- **Slash (/)** is reserved for use with proximity operators, as in PRE/4.
- Broaden your search - separate your search terms with **OR**.
- Narrow your search - separate your search terms with **AND**. By default, ProQuest assumes an **AND** relationship between your search terms.
- **Advanced Search** - look for terms in specific fields (*Part II handout*)
- **Target your search more precisely** - move your cursor over the Advanced Search link to display a menu offering both Advanced Search, and [Command Line](#).
- **Publication Search** – browse specific issues (newspaper, journal, or magazine) or articles in a specific publication.
- **Phrase searching** - look for phrases by enclosing them in quotation marks, for example, **"healthy eating."**
- **Word variants** - to retrieve only a particular variant of a word, such as **colour** but not **color**, enter the word in quotation marks in the search box, for example: **"colour"**.
- **Limit your search** - select available limiter check boxes such as **Full text** or **Peer-reviewed** to focus your search.  
**Note:** Available limiters vary by database and search method.

## How ProQuest interprets your search

You can search by entering words into a search box without specifying search fields. When you do:

- ProQuest will retrieve documents containing all your search terms, appearing in any field (document titles, authors, subjects, full text, etc.). For example, a search on **healthy eating** is the same as a search for **healthy AND eating**. The search will not retrieve results with just the word **healthy** or just the word **eating**. ProQuest will look for the terms **healthy** and **eating** in all fields.
- **Note:** If your account does not search full text by default, a notice to that effect displays above the Basic Search box.

# Operators, fields, and special characters

**Note:** You can enter operators in either lowercase or uppercase - **OR** will work the same as **or**.

Operator	Description	Example
<b>AND</b>	Look for documents that contain <b>all</b> of your words or phrases. Use <b>AND</b> to narrow your search and get fewer results.	<b>food AND nutrition</b>
<b>OR</b>	Look for documents that contain <b>any</b> of your words or phrases. Use <b>OR</b> to broaden your search and get more results.	<b>food OR nutrition</b>
<b>NOT</b>	Look for documents that contain one of your search terms, but not the other.	<b>nursing NOT shortage</b>
<b>NEAR/n</b> or <b>N/n</b>	Look for documents that contain two search terms, in any order, within a specified number of words apart. Replace 'n' with a number. In the example, 3 means within 3 words.  Used alone, NEAR defaults to NEAR/4. <b>Important to know:</b> When you shorten <b>NEAR</b> to <b>N</b> , you must provide a number. For example, <b>internet N/3 media</b> . If you search on <b>internet N media</b> , ProQuest interprets <b>N</b> as a search term, rather than as a proximity operator.	<b>nursing NEAR/3 education media N/3 women</b>
<b>PRE/n</b> or <b>P/n</b> or <b>-</b>	Look for documents that contain one search term that appears within a specified number of words before a second term.  Replace 'n' with a number. In the example, 4 means the first term precedes the second term by 4 or fewer words.  A hyphen (-) joining two terms within a search is equivalent to PRE/0 or P/0.	<b>nursing PRE/4 education shares P/4 technologies nursing-education</b>
<b>EXACT</b> or <b>X</b>	Look for your exact search term in its entirety. Used primarily for searching specific fields, like Subject. For instance, a search on <b>su.exact("higher education")</b> , will return documents with a subject term of "higher education", but not documents with a subject term of "higher education funding".  <b>Important to know:</b> EXACT is not included in the 'operator precedence' list shown above. Unlike the operators listed there—like AND or PRE—EXACT is neither a Boolean or a Proximity operator. EXACT simply allows you to specify with precision occurrences of an 'exact' term, without returning occurrences of multiple-word terms that include your search terms.  <b>Important to know:</b> When you apply the EXACT operator to a search term, you cannot also apply the truncation (*) or wild card (?) characters to the same search term. Use of the EXACT operator implies the desire for exact precision. Both the truncation and wildcard characters undercut that precision by broadening your search.	<b>SU.EXACT("higher education") SU.X("higher education")</b>

Operator	Description	Example
<b>LNK</b>	<p>Link a descriptor term to a Subheading (qualifier) by selecting the proper qualifier in the Thesaurus window, or by using the <b>LNK</b> (or --) in Basic, Advanced or Command Line Search.</p> <p>Also, link two related data elements together, to ensure proper specificity in your search.</p> <p><b>Important to know:</b> LNK is not included in the 'operator precedence' list shown above. Unlike the operators listed there—like AND or PRE—LNK is neither a Boolean or a Proximity operator. LNK enables you to specify precise relationships between qualifiers and terms in your search query.</p>	<p><b>MESH(descriptor LNK qualifier)</b></p> <p><b>MESH("aspirin" LNK "adverse effects")</b></p> <p><b>MESH("aspirin -- adverse effects")</b></p>

## Operator precedence

ProQuest follows a default order when interpreting a search that uses operators to combine search terms. If your search includes operators such as **AND** or **OR**, ProQuest combines them in the order indicated below:

1. **PRE**
2. **NEAR**
3. **AND**
4. **OR**
5. **NOT**

For example, the search:

**education AND elementary NOT secondary**

is interpreted in this order:

**(education AND elementary) NOT secondary**

Since **education AND elementary** is interpreted first, the search will return results on **education** that discuss **elementary education**, but not **secondary education**.

**Note:** For more controlled searching, use parentheses to override ProQuest's default operator precedence.

# Search fields

Search fields are indexed. For example, **AU(smith)** will retrieve only documents where **smith** appears in the author field. Similarly, **AU(smith) and TI(food)** will retrieve only documents with **food** in the title and **smith** as the author. Separate codes with commas to search multiple fields at once.

For example:

- **AB, TI(food)** - retrieve documents that have **food** in the title, or documents that have **food** in the abstract.
- **AB, TI(food or nursing)** - retrieve documents that contain either **food** or **nursing** in the abstract, or in the title.

For more targeted searching, use multiple field codes with one search query.

- **AB, TI(food)** - retrieve documents that have **food** in the title, or documents that have **food** in the abstract.
- **AB, TI(food or nursing)** - retrieve documents that contain either **food** or **nursing** in the abstract, or in the title.

## Wildcards and truncation

You can use wildcards and truncation when you're looking for documents that contain spelling variants, or words that begin with the same character string.

Character	Description	Example
?	Wildcard character - used to replace any <b>single character</b> , either inside or at the right end of a word. Multiple wildcards can be used to represent multiple characters.  <b>Important to know:</b> A single <b>?</b> wildcard character will match both zero and one character... meaning <b>cat?</b> will return matches on both <b>cat</b> and <b>cats</b> . Similarly, <b>cat??</b> will return matches on <b>cat</b> , <b>cats</b> , and <b>catch</b> —0, 1, or 2 characters in that example.	<b>nurse?</b> Finds: nurse, nurses, and nursed.  <b>sm?th</b> Finds: smith and smyth  <b>ad???</b> Finds: ad, ads, adds, added, adult, adopt
*	<b>Truncation character (*)</b> - retrieves variations of the search term. Use the truncation character at the end (right-hand truncation) or in the middle of search terms. Each truncated word can return up to 500 word variations.  <b>Standard truncation (*)</b> retrieves variations on the search term, replacing up to 5 characters.  <b>Defined truncation ([*n])</b> replaces up to the number of characters specified, for example <b>[*9]</b> . The maximum number of characters that can be entered is 20.	<b>farm*</b> Finds: farm, farms, farmer, farming  <b>colo*r</b> Finds: colour, color

Character	Description	Example
<p><b>Important to know:</b> You cannot enter a wildcard (?) or truncation (*) character at the left-hand/leading position of a search term. For example, *old or ?tion would both be invalid searches. You also cannot search with a single wildcard (?) or single truncation (*) character. Both are invalid searches.</p>		
<p><b>Important to know:</b> Any terms retrieved using either truncation (*) or wildcard (?) characters are not considered when sorting your results based on relevance. That's because there is no way for ProQuest to assess the relevance of these terms to your research. For example, your search for 'bio*' could return occurrences of any or all of these terms: 'bionic' or 'biosynthesis' or 'biodegrade' or 'biographic.' One, some, all, or none could be relevant to your research.</p>		
[*n]	[*n] is used to denote up to how many characters you want to truncate.	<b>nutr[*5]</b> Finds: nutrition, nutrient, nutrients
<	Less than. Used for numeric fields like publication year.	<b>YR(&lt;2005)</b>
>	Greater than. Used for numeric fields like publication year.	<b>YR(&gt;2005)</b>
<=	Less than or equal to. Used for numeric fields like publication year.	<b>YR(&lt;=2005)</b>
>=	Greater than or equal to. Used for numeric fields like publication year.	<b>YR(&gt;=2005)</b>
-	Use a hyphen to indicate a range when searching numerical fields, such as Publication date.	<b>YR(2005-2008)</b>