

Creating an Effective Search

Develop a list of words (keywords) for your search. Use a thesaurus to develop a list of keywords or search terms before you even begin your search.

Some engines give more weight to the first keyword in a query. Use the most unique keyword first, or try varying the order of the keywords. Be sure to place more than a single word search in quotes. If you are searching more than one term, connect the terms with the word AND, OR, or NOT. Be certain to capitalize this connecting word, or it will be considered a STOP word in your search, ignoring the AND, OR or NOT altogether. This will create an ineffective search. GOLDEN RULE: AND, OR, NOT IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS – ALWAYS when used as connecting words. Some examples follow.

<u>Type of Search</u>	<u>Keyword or Phrase</u>
Keyword Search	chocolate
Phrase Search	"chocolate bar"
AND Search	chocolate AND mint
NOT Search	chocolate NOT mint "chocolate bar" NOT mint
OR Search	chocolate OR "chocolate mint"
Name Search	"Russell Stover" "Stover, Russell"

Do not use a, an, but, for, of, the, etc. in your search. It will save the search engine time hunting if these are removed from your search.

Always check the search engine short cuts provided in either "search tips" or "toolkit" provided in each search tool to see what specific types of searches are preferred before you begin your search.

Truncation and Wildcard Characters

Truncation and wildcard characters may also be used in some online databases and search engines or metasearch tools. Check "search tips" or "toolkit" for each to see if the following can also be used.

- * The symbol * is used as a right-handed truncation character only; it will find all forms of a word. For example, searching for **econom*** will find "economy", "economics", "economical", etc.
- ? The symbol ? is used to replace any single character, either inside the word or the right end of the word.
? cannot be used to begin a word.
For example, searching for "**wom?n**" will find "woman" and "women." Searching for "**t?re**" will find "tire", "tyre", "tore", etc.