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LexisNexis® Publisher
Search Tips

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Developing a Search Request

LexisNexis® Publisher uses Boolean search logic. A Boolean search request includes (1) keywords and phrases that reflect ideas essential to your research and the optional terms and (2) connectors that let you search for word variations and link your search keywords and phrases. Using other options, such as date limitations, wildcard characters, and segment searching, can help shape your search results.

LexisNexis Publisher searches for documents that contain the specific words and combinations of words in your search request.

To develop a search request:

1. Identify the topic.

    Determine the area that you want to research, for example, information about efforts in the fast food industry to use recyclable packaging.

2. Choose your search words.

    The words should reflect ideas essential to your research topic. Include alternative words and avoid words that are too general. For example, to find articles about efforts in the fast food industry to use recyclable packaging, you might use these words: *recycle, package, container, fast food.*

    > **Tip:** The LexisNexis services are not case sensitive.

3. Use truncation and wildcards to include word variations.

    ! Finds a root word plus all the words made by adding letters to the end of it.

    Example:

    recycl!

    finds recycle, recycling and recyclable

    > **Tip:** Words that work best with "!" are those that are unique in their truncated form. For example, if you search for *fir!* (thinking that you want to find *fired, firing,* or *fires*), your results will also include *first, firm,* and so on.

    * Holds one space for a character at any point in a word.

    Example:

    bernst**n

    finds both the *ei* and the *ie* spelling of the name.

4. Link the search words in a search request using connectors.

    Connectors such as *OR, AND, W/N* and so on define relationships between your search words. Once you've decided on your search request, you can run the search.

    Example:

    recycl! W/25 fast food W/10 container OR package

    finds documents where either *container* or *package* may be in the same sentence as *fast food* and *fast food* may be in the same paragraph as *recycle* (or its variations). Depending on your results, you may then decide to edit your search, change your source, or use a number of other options for searching.

Boolean Connectors

- AND

    Use *AND* when all the terms must appear and may be far apart from each other.

    Example:

    air bags AND safety

    If you are searching for a phrase that contains the word *and*, omit the word *and* from your search.

    Example:

    profit loss

    would find the phrase *profit and loss*

- AND NOT

    Use *AND NOT* to exclude specific terms.

    > **Note:** This connector must be used at the end of a search string.

    Example:

    ganglia OR tumor AND NOT malignant

- OR

    Use *OR* when at least one of the terms must appear (such as synonyms, alternate spellings, or abbreviations).

    Example:

    kidney OR renal

- W/n

    Use W/*n* to specify the proximity between the terms. The W/*n* does not specify the word order - either word may appear first.

    > **Tip:** *W* represents *within* and *n* represents the number of words (from 1 to 255).

    Example:

    professional sport W/15 antitrust

    To determine the value to use for *n*, consider the following as a rule of thumb:

    - To find terms in the same phrase, use *W/3*, *W/4*, or *W/5*.
    - To find terms in the same sentence, use *W/15*.
    - To find terms in the same paragraph, use *W/50*.

    > **Tip:** To be more precise, you may also use *W/s* (within sentence), *W/p* (within paragraph), or *W/SEG* (within segment).

- PRE/n

  Use *PRE/n* to find two words when the first word must precede the second word by a specified number of words.

  > **Tip:** *PRE* represents *precedes* and *n* represents the number of words(from 1 to 255).

  Example:

  behavioral PRE/3 disturbances

  would find articles in which behavioral precedes disturbances by three or fewer words

- NOT W/n

  Use *NOT W/n* when the first word is required to appear in the document and the second word may also appear, but not within *n* words of the first word.

  Example:

  rico NOT W/5 puerto

  finds at least one instance where the term *rico* appears separated from the word *puerto*; however, *Puerto Rico* can appear elsewhere in the document

- NOT W/seg

  Use *NOT W/seg* to find documents that have at least one segment in which the first search word appears, but not the other search word.

  Example:

  tank NOT W/SEG m1

  finds documents in which there is at least one segment with the word *tank* but not the word *m1*. This does not mean the same document could not have both words in some other segment.

Connector Order and Priority

Connectors operate in the following order of priority:

1. *OR*
2. *W/n, PRE/n, NOT W/n*
3. *W/s*
4. *W/p*
5. *W/SEG*
6. *NOT W/SEG*
7. *AND*
8. *AND NOT*

If you use two or more of the same connector, they operate left to right. If the *n*'s have different numbers, the smallest number is operated on first. You cannot use the *W/p* and *W/s* connectors with a proximity connector (for example, *W/n*).

Example:

bankrupt! W/25 discharg! AND student OR college OR education! W/5 loan

is operated on in the following manner:

- *OR* has the highest priority, so it operates first and creates a unit of *student OR college OR education!*

- *W/5*, the smaller of the W/n connectors, ties together the word *loan* and the previously formed unit of *student OR college OR education!*

- *W/25* operates next and creates a unit of *bankrupt! W/25 discharg!*.

- *AND*, with the lowest priority, operates last and links the units formed in the second and third bullets above.

Changing Connector Priority

To change the connector priority, use parentheses. Connectors inside parentheses have priority over (that is, they operate before) connectors outside parentheses.

Example:

bankrupt! W/25 discharg! AND (student OR college OR education W/5 loan)

prioritizes as

(student OR college OR education W/5 loan) AND (bankrupt! W/25 discharg!)

Words

Words are the basic units of a search. A word is a single character or group of characters (alphabetic or numeric) with a space on either side.

> **Examples:**
>
> *McPherson*   one searchable word
>
> *§1988*   one searchable word
>
> *§ 1988*   two searchable words

A hyphen is treated as a space, so a hyphenated word is seen as two words.

> **Examples:**
>
> *preemptory*   (one word)
>
> *pre-emptory* (two words)
>
> *pre emptory* (two words)

Tips

A period is treated like a space except when:

- The period is preceded and followed by a number.

  99.9   one word

- The period is preceded by a space and followed by a number.

  .999   one word

- The period is preceded by only one alphabetic character and followed (with no spaces in the sequence) by any number of single letters each of which is followed by a period.

  F.B.I.   one word

  F. B. I. three words because of the space after the periods

Guidelines for Search Terms

- Choose search terms that are specific or closely related to the topic of interest.

  Example:

  medical malpractice OR physician! negligence

- Choose terms you might use when discussing the topic with a colleague, including current jargon or buzzwords.

  Example:

  freedom of information act OR foia

- Use words that reflect ideas essential to your research topic.

  Example:

  If you are researching a medical issue, you may opt to include words such as *treatments*, *cures*, or *side effects*.

- Include alternative words and abbreviations.

  Example:

  mri OR magnetic resonance imaging

- Avoid words that are too general, such as *illness* or *behavior*.

Proper Names

Because of the many ways in which a proper name can be expressed, use the following search pattern to obtain a comprehensive result: *first name OR first initial W/3 last name.*

Example:

mary OR m w/3 jones

finds documents referring to *Mary Jones*. This method ensures comprehensive results and includes variations such as *Mary J. Jones*, *M.J. Jones*, *Mary Jane Jones*, *Jones, Mary J.* and *Jones, M.J.* Some names searched using this pattern will yield irrelevant references in the search results. Following are some suggestions for dealing with these situations.

- Add additional search terms to decrease the likelihood of irrelevant results. For example, use this search if Mary Jones is a CPA:

  Example:

  (mary OR m W/3 jones) AND cpa OR c.p.a. OR accountant

  This helps eliminate references to other Mary Joneses.

- The order of surname and forename may differ.

  Example:

  smith W/2 r

  The proximity connector will find documents that contain both *R Smith* and *Smith, R.*

- The presence and formatting of multiple initials may differ.

  Example:

  rj smith

  This finds *RJ Smith* but not *R.J. Smith* (with periods) or *R J Smith* (with spaces).

- To find all possibilities, use an OR connector:

  rj OR r j OR r.j. W/3 smith

  > **Note:** The LexisNexis® services interpret the periods in initials as blank spaces.

- A name may be given with or without middle initials.

  Example:

  raymond W/3 smith

  A proximity connector such as *W/n* will find articles by *Raymond Smith*, *Raymond J. Smith*, and *Raymond J.A. Smith*.

- To account for all the possible combinations of name presentation, we recommend a combination of techniques.

  Example:

  (smith W/3 ray! OR r)

  This search will find all of the above examples.

Plurals

- Using the singular word form will retrieve the singular, plural and possessive forms of most words.

  Example:

  city

  finds *city*, *cities*, *city's* and *cities'*

- The LexisNexis® services will not automatically find irregular plural forms or the plural form of words that end in *us* or *is*.

  Example:

  bonus

  would not find bonuses

  Example:

  child

  would not find children

  > **Tip:** Use the OR connector for such words.

  bonus OR bonuses

  child OR children OR children's

Wildcard Characters

Using wildcard characters and truncation lets you easily combine or eliminate search words, making your search simpler.

- Use an exclamation point (!) to find a root word plus all the words made by adding letters to the end of it.

  Example:

  acqui!

  finds variations on the word *acquire* such as *acquires*, *acquired*, *acquiring,* and *acquisition*

  > **Note:** Use "!" only on unique roots.

  Example:

  fir!

  will find *fired*, *firing*, and *fires*, but it will also find *first*, which you may not want

- Use an asterisk (*) to replace characters anywhere in a word except the first character. Use one asterisk for each character you want to replace. It is especially useful to hold a space for variations in spelling at any point in a word.

  Example:

  *wom*n*

  finds *woman* and *women*

  *bernst**n*

  finds *bernstein* and *bernstien*

  If you use asterisks at the end of a word, they do not all have to be filled, but you may find only up to the specified number of characters.

  Example:

  *transplant*** finds *transplant*, *transplanted*, *transplanter*

  > **Note:** *transplant*** does not find *transplantation* or *transplanting* because only two wildcard characters were used. To find all the variations of transplant, use the exclamation point instead of the asterisk.

Segment Searching

Documents of a general type have a common structure. In LexisNexis Publisher, these natural parts or divisions of the document structure are called *segments*. For example, cases contain name, date, court, opinion, and dissent segments, among others. News articles contain headline, date, byline, and lead segments, among others.

You can restrict your search to a specific part or segment of a document, such as the court that heard the case or the reporter who wrote the article. Segment searching is especially useful when you are looking for:

- Articles on a particular topic

- Articles written by a particular reporter

- Information about a particular person, company, or industry

- Information published on, before, or after a particular date

You can perform segment searching by typing your segment search terms directly in the search box. Enter the segment name, then type your search words enclosed in parentheses.

Examples:

name (john W/3 doe)

finds articles about a particular person

byline (john W/3 doe)

finds articles written by a particular reporter

> **Tip:** Use the *AND* connector to link a segment search to other search words or to other segments.

Examples:

subject (age discrimination) AND company (xyzq)

finds articles that discuss age discrimination in relation to a particular company

name (john W/3 doe) AND subject (nuclear power plants)

finds articles that mention John Doe and nuclear power plants

Additional Resources and Information

Additional Resources

For a copy of the current *LexisNexis® Publisher User Guide*, as well as other resources such as FAQs, Best Practice Tips, and a list of recent Publisher enhancements, please go to www.lexisnexis.com/infopro/publisher.

Research Assistance

- For technical assistance, call Customer Support at 877-810-5325.

- For training or for help in formulating a search, contact your LexisNexis Librarian Relations Consultant.