Boolean Searching

What is Boolean?

- Boolean is a logic based way of searching a database.
- There are three main principles in searching with Boolean, they are:
  1. Choosing concept keywords.
  2. Using connecting keywords using terms such as AND/OR.
  3. Using truncation (a searching technique where a word ending is replaced by a symbol).
- Follow the step by step process below to build your Boolean search.

Step 1: Choose Your Keywords

If you have an assignment question break down the main elements or keywords, see the example below, the keywords are underlined:

**Essay Topic:**

Current trends in midwifery include the option for women to choose alternative methods of pain relief. Should cannabis be legalised for medicinal use?

Step 2: Choose Your Synonyms

There may be many different terms that you can use to describe the same word. It is important to list these words because different articles may use different words to describe the same concept. For example:

- Cannabis, marijuana
- Legalised, decriminalised
- Medicinal, pain relief, palliative
Step 3: Choose Your Connectors

Concept words (narrows search)
**AND** = all of the words

Alternative words (broadens search)
**OR** = some of the words

Tip:
Use double quotation marks to group words together in a phrase e.g. “pain relief”

Step 4: Use Truncation

Truncation can be used to find other variations of words. Symbols are used at the root of the word and databases will find other variations of the word.

**Truncation examples:**
- Legal* - will search for legalise, legalised, legally
- Medic* - will search for medicinal, medical, medicine

Step 5: Build Your Search

Put your keywords and synonyms together using connectors. Truncate your words to finish formulating your search using Boolean. See the example below:

**Search Formulation:**
Cannabis OR marijuana AND legal* OR decriminali* AND Medic* OR “pain relief” OR palliative
Example Boolean Search in CINAHL

- **OR operator**
- **Truncation**
- **AND Operator**