Search refinements and modifications

Boolean logic

Boolean logic assists a searcher to combine two or more terms to make a search more accurate.

AND retrieves documents on condition that both search terms are present.

OR retrieves documents with either of the search terms

NOT excludes documents with one of the search terms from the results

Truncation

Rather than having to type earthquake or earthquakes, you can stop typing at the first point which makes your term unique and insert a "wildcard", usually an asterisk *. Note that many search engines now search as if the end of a word is truncated automatically.

Field searching

Often you will find an "advanced search" option which includes field searching. This allows you to specify that your search term must appear is a specific field, like the title or the abstract. Most fields are self-evident (author; article title; publication date etc)

If you have too few results:

Remove some search terms if you think they might be restricting your search

Chose broader search terms (natural disasters rather than earthquakes)

Use the OR Boolean operator to search a range of synonyms

Think of more synonyms

Find a useful article and look at the keywords describing that article, or search for some of the articles cited in the first article

See if the site offers controlled vocabulary (their own list of keywords which takes care of synonyms). See the list of headings in DOAJ as an example of a controlled vocabulary.5.6

If you have too many results

Add some search terms to make your search more specific

Use the AND Boolean operator to combine terms which are equally important to your search.

Use field searching, for example to specify that terms must be in the title

Specify publication date, to retrieve only the more current articles.