4. Wildcards, Truncation & Phrases

Use wildcards to search for words with multiple spellings
Learn how to find variant forms of keywords using truncation
Use phrases to make your searches more relevant

Wildcards

Wildcards allow you to search for alternate spellings of words. By replacing a letter with a question mark, an asterisk or a hash symbol you are quickly able to search for both the American and British versions of search terms.

Examples: analy?e or analy*e = analyse or anlayze

Behavior or behavio*r = Behaviour or behavior

Truncation

To truncate a word, reduce it to its most basic form or root word. In this example, we are using ‘counsel’. Place asterisks at the end of the root word to find multiple endings. The database will search for all the variant forms of the word, its tenses, plurals and in some cases alternate spellings.

Example: counsel* = counselling, counseling, counsellor, counselled, counsel and so on.

Phrases

When a phrase in enclosed by double quotation marks, the exact phrase is searched. You can use this when you are looking for a specific title from a reading list or for a particular phrase or term.

Example: “cognitive behav* therapy”

Tutorial Checklist

☐ I can truncate words using an asterisk.
☐ I know how to use wildcards to search for variations in spelling.
☐ I understand when to use phrases when searching.

Ask a librarian