Boolean Operator Basics

This is a Brief Online Learning Tutorial (or BOLT) brought to you by the LISTEN project, a HRSA funded project focusing on improving the information literacy competencies of nursing students and professional nurses.
When searching for information using databases you can end up with too little or too much information. By using Boolean operators you can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of your search. This BOLT will help you understand the basics of Boolean operators.
Boolean operators are words that are used to combine search terms to broaden or narrow the search results. Boolean operators define the logical relationship among search terms, so they are also called Boolean logic. The three most commonly used Boolean operators are AND, OR, and NOT.
Use Boolean operators to combine your search terms, narrow your search results, expand your search, and make your search results more relevant, specific, and focused. Boolean operators can also help exclude some words from your search. In brief, use Boolean operators to improve your search.
For instance, if you use the Boolean operator AND to search for diabetes AND pregnancy, you are narrowing your search. The database only retrieves articles containing both diabetes and pregnancy. AND decreases your search results.
If you use OR to search for headache OR migraine, the database will retrieve all articles containing either headache or migraine, which actually expands your search. This is useful to search for words that have synonyms. OR increases search results.
This diagram illustrates that the search is only to retrieve articles about music. Anything about jazz will be excluded from the search. NOT excludes certain specific information in your search.
Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AND --</th>
<th>Combines more than one different search terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR --</td>
<td>Puts together synonyms or alternative search terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOT --</td>
<td>Excludes certain words from the search</td>
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In summary, the Boolean operator AND is used to combine different search terms and it reduces the search results. OR is used to combine alternative search terms or synonyms. It increases the search results. NOT is used to exclude certain words from the search.
Continue to visit the LISTEN website, at listenuphealth.org, for more helpful tips on using technology and seeking, evaluating, and applying information in nursing to support evidence-based nursing practice.
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