

Creating an Effective Search Strategy. Part 2

When you are given a research question or developing your dissertation topic you must first identify your key words and then any synonyms or related terms in order to create your search terms (see Part 1).

Combining Search Terms

Once you have identified your search terms you need to consider how to combine all the terms and topics. Search logic helps you to make sure you do this effectively.

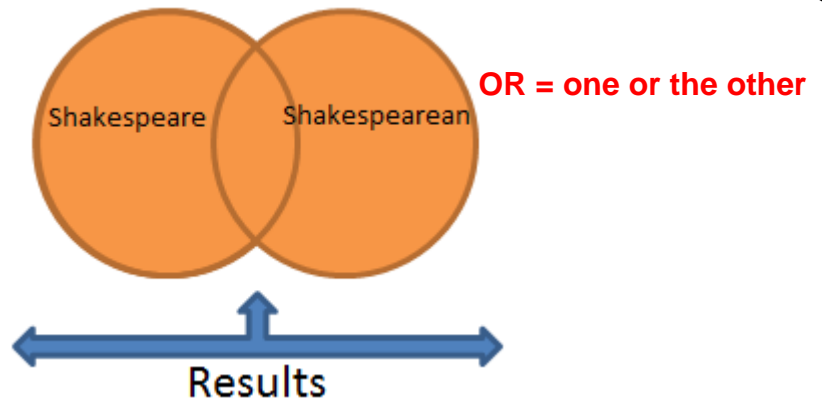
- 1 When you are searching by keywords or subject terms, you want to be sure to find all possible variations and alternatives for the same concept.

To do this, combine search terms with **OR**. This will do a broad search, finding **ANY** of your terms.

So a search for

Shakespeare OR Shakespearean

will do a broad search for **EITHER** term

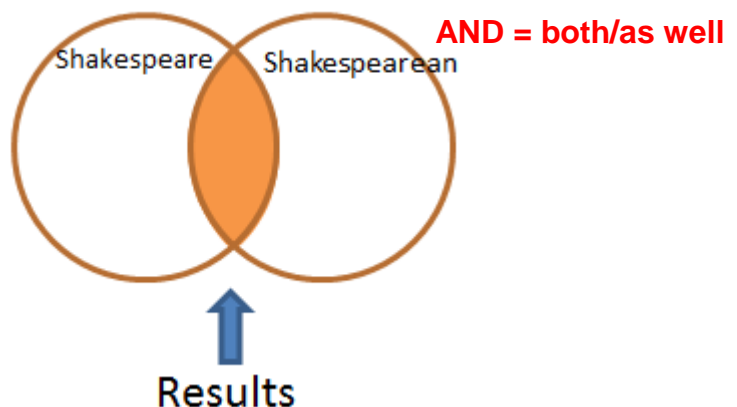


- 2 When you have considered all synonyms and variant terms for each search term, you will want to combine your topics, to find just research that covers both or all of your search areas. To do this, you then combine your search terms with **AND**

So a search for

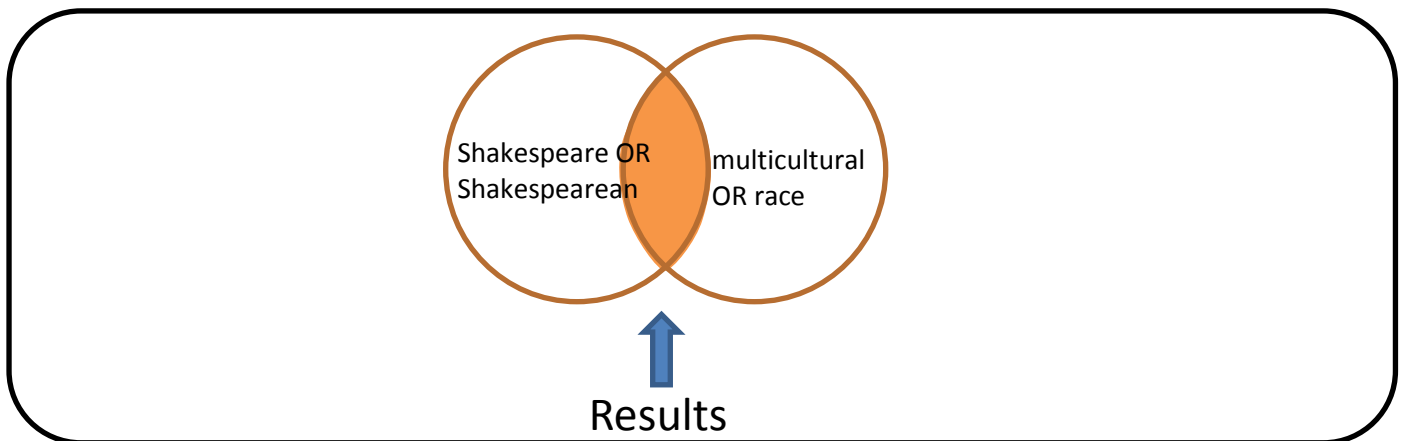
Shakespeare AND Shakespearean

will do a narrow search for results which include **BOTH** terms



Using (brackets)

The search terms for each separate concept are grouped together with brackets. This means the database will look for all variants of **Shakespeare** and of **Multicultural** separately first, before combining the 2 sets of results with **AND**. If you didn't use brackets, the database would run the search from left to right, so you would end up with material that covered **Shakespeare AND multicultural** together, but not both together.



Using AND with OR

- ✓ **Shakespeare AND (multicultural OR race)** = Results will include **Shakespeare** in combination with **multicultural OR race**
- ✗ **Shakespeare AND multicultural OR race** = Results will include **Shakespeare** in combination with **multicultural, or race** on its own

Using Database Search Boxes

Here's how a search would look in **MLA** - one of the major arts databases. Notice that if you use the advanced search option, you don't need to worry about brackets, as the database's search boxes allow you to easily group your search terms and guide your use of **AND** and **OR** to connect terms.

ProQuest | **MLA International Bibliography** | Basic Search | Advanced ▾ | About

Modern Language Association | **MLA**

Advanced Search

[Directory of Periodicals](#) | [Look Up Citation](#) | [Command Line](#)

[Thesaurus](#) | [Field codes](#) | [Search tips](#)

<input type="text" value="shakespeare*"/>	in	<input type="text" value="Publisher abstract - ABS"/>
AND ▾ (<input type="text" value="multicultur* OR rac* OR ethnic*"/>)	OR	<input type="text"/>
AND ▾ (<input type="text"/>)	OR	<input type="text"/>

Add a row | Remove a row