

Simple Tips for Searching Lexis/Nexis

Developing a Search

To create a search, start with terms and phrases that reflect ideas essential to your research. Then include connectors (such as OR and AND) and other special characters to link the terms and phrases, and to search for word variations. You can also use options such as date restrictions and document section searching to create a more specific search.

If you're new to developing searches, the following steps will help you get started:

Identify the topic.

Determine the area that you want to research. For example, information about efforts in the fast food industry to use recyclable packaging.

Select your Source.

For a topic like recycling in the fast food industry, you might want to begin your search in a news source. The "News, All (English, Full Text)" group source contains hundreds of full-text business, financial, trade, and news publications.

Choose your search terms.

The terms should reflect ideas essential to your research topic. Include alternative terms, and try to avoid terms that are too general. For example, to find articles about efforts in the fast food industry to use recyclable packaging, you might use these terms and phrases:

recycle package container fast food

LexisNexis® searches for documents containing the specific terms and combinations of terms in your search request. Every term (or form of the term) in your search request must appear in the document for that document to be included in your search results.

Note: Searching is not case-sensitive.

Use truncation and wildcards to include word variations.

The truncation (!) and wildcard (*) characters let you easily combine or eliminate search terms, making your search simpler.

! Finds a root word plus all the terms made by adding letters to the end of it.

recycl! finds "recycle," "recycling" and "recyclable."

Note: Terms that work best with ! are those that are unique in their truncated form. For example, if you search for *fir!* (thinking that you want to find "fired," "firing," or "fires"), your results will also include "first," "firm," and so on.

bernst**n finds the "ei" and the "ie" spelling of the name.

Link the search terms using connectors.

Connectors such as OR, AND, W/N, and so on define relationships between your search terms. For example,

recycl! W/25 fast food W/10 container OR package

Finds documents where either "container" or "package" is within 10 words of "fast food," and "fast food" is within 25 words of "recycle" (or its variants).

Connector Order and Priority

Connectors operate in the following order of priority:

OR

W/n, PRE/n, NOT W/n

W/sent

W/para

W/SEG

NOT W/SEG

AND

AND NOT

If you use two or more of the same connector, they operate left to right. If the "n" (number) connectors have different numbers, the smallest number is operated on first. You cannot use the W/para and W/sent connectors with a proximity connector (e.g., W/n).

Example: bankrupt! W/25 discharg! AND student OR college OR education W/5 loan

is operated on in the following manner:

Because OR has the highest priority, it operates first and creates a unit of *student OR college OR education!*.

W/5, the smaller of the W/n connectors, ties together the term *loan* and the previously formed unit of *student OR college OR education!*.

W/25 operates next and creates a unit of *bankrupt! W/25 discharg!*.

AND, with the lowest priority, operates last and links the units formed in the second and third bullets above.

Changing Connector Priority

To change the connector priority, use brackets. Connectors inside brackets have priority over, or operate before, connectors outside brackets.

Example: bankrupt! W/25 discharg! AND (student OR college OR education W/5 loan)

The search above prioritizes as: *(student OR college OR education W/5 loan) AND (bankrupt! W/25 discharg!)*

Date Restrictions

Sometimes you need to limit your searches to a particular time frame. The easiest way to specify a date restriction is by using the Specify Date options on a search form. However, you may also manually enter dates in the Enter Search Terms field if documents in the source you're using contain a date section.

For example, you may want to restrict your search to find cases decided on, before, or after a particular date. Because date sections involve numbers, they are "arithmetically searchable." The most effective date format is: dd/mm/yyyy and date sections use the arithmetic operators shown below:

= is	equal to or is
> aft	greater than or after
< bef	less than or before

The following are examples of date restrictions.

date = 2004	or	date is 2004
date > 31 December 2004	or	date aft 31 december 2004
date < 1/1/1997	or	date bef 01/01/2004

Terms

Terms are the basic units of a search. A term is a single character or group of characters, alphabetic or numeric, with a space on either side.

Examples:

McPherson	one searchable term
§1988	one searchable term
§ 1988	two searchable terms

A hyphen is treated as a space, so a hyphenated term is seen as two terms.

Examples:

pretrial	one term
pre-trial	two terms
pre trial	two terms

Search Terms: Guidelines

Choose search terms that are specific or closely related to the topic of interest.

Example: medical malpractice OR physician! negligence

Choose terms you might use when discussing the topic with a colleague, including current jargon or buzzwords.

Example: Freedom of Information Act OR FOIA

The terms should reflect ideas essential to your research topic, such as treatments, cures, or side-effects.

Include alternative terms and abbreviations.

Example: mri OR magnetic resonance imaging

Avoid terms that are too general, such as "illness" or "behavior."

The LexisNexis® SmartIndexing Technology™ feature (Index Terms)

Index terms can help you find documents that more closely match the topic you are researching. You may use index terms that describe companies (e.g., ROYAL DUTCH/SHELL GROUP), industries (e.g., FOOD & BEVERAGE), subjects (e.g., POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS), or geographic locations (e.g., NORTH & SOUTH AMERICAS). To add index terms to your

search, click the "Add keywords (Index Terms) to your search" or "Find Company Names" link on a search form.

Proper Names

Because of the many ways in which a proper name can be expressed, use the following search pattern to obtain a comprehensive result:

(first name OR first initial W/3 last name)

To find documents referring to Mary Jones, use this search:

(Mary OR M W/3 Jones)

Note: This method ensures comprehensive results and includes variations such as Mary J. Jones, M. J. Jones, Mary Jane Jones, Jones, Mary J., and Jones, M. J.

Some names searched using this pattern will yield irrelevant references in the search results. When this happens, you may add additional search terms to decrease the likelihood of irrelevant results. For example, if Mary Jones is a CPA, you could use this search:

(Mary OR M W/3 Jones AND CPA OR C.P.A. OR accountant)

The order of surname and forename may differ. For example, to find documents that contain R Smith and Smith, R, use a proximity connector like W/n.

smith W/2 r

The presentation of multiple initials may differ. For example:

rj smith

would find RJ Smith but not R.J. Smith (with periods) or R J Smith (with spaces). To find all possibilities, use an OR connector:

(rj OR r j OR r.j. W/3 smith)

Note: The system interprets the periods in initials as blank spaces.

A name may be given with or without middle initials.

To find articles by Raymond Smith, Raymond J. Smith and Raymond J. A. Smith use a proximity connector like W/n:

(raymond W/3 smith)

To account for all the possible combinations of name presentation, we recommend a combination of techniques. To find all of the above examples, you could use:

(smith W/3 ray! OR r)

Plurals

Using the singular word form will retrieve the singular, plural, and possessive forms of most words. For example, city would find *city*, *cities*, *city's*, and *cities'*

The system will not automatically find the plural form of words that end in "us" or "is", or other irregular plural forms. For example, bonus would not find *bonuses* and child would not find *children*. Use the OR connector in these instances.