Search rules

In this video, we will speak about the importance of using Primo’s search rules when looking for information to support an academic piece of work. Things you need to consider include:

- The time you have available for searching, bearing in mind you still need to read, consider the material and write the piece of work.

- Spelling: be aware of differences between UK and US English e.g. labour/labor so you don’t miss useful resources from either location, or elsewhere in the English-speaking world. Also, Primo does not suggest alternatives if you misspell something.

- Think of alternative words, or synonyms. You will be expanding your vocabulary on the subject as you go through the searching process so be ready to incorporate new words into your searches if they more accurately reflect the topic you are working on.

- An important element of search rules are Boolean operators or linking words. The Boolean operators that we recommend using are AND and OR. They must be written in uppercase. These help to narrow or broaden your search, respectively. More details on these to follow.

- You also need to be aware of Primo’s search rules. Using search rules will improve the efficiency of any searching that you do.

Using the asterisk at the end of a word tells Primo to find the root of a word and any potential endings to it. The asterisk is also known as a truncation symbol. For example, culture* searches for records that contain the words culture, cultural, culturally etc.

Using a question mark within a word will tell Primo to perform a single character wildcard search. For example, organi?e searches for records that contain the words organize with a z and organise with an s.

To search for a phrase, e.g. European Union, type quotation marks “ ” around the words. This action forces Primo to look for these words in this particular order.

Using the following example topic:

“Discuss the social and economic changes in the United States during World War Two”

we will demonstrate how applying the search rules affects the number and quality of results that you get.

Here we are only searching for “world war II” and “united states of America” by combining these two phrases with the Boolean operator AND. At this stage we are not looking for the social and economic aspects. This search only brings back 2 results. However, if you add synonyms to the search by using the Boolean operator OR you get a greater number of results. Also, using quotation marks around our phrases ensures that Primo looks for these words in that particular order.
The specific search rules for Primo can be found in the help section of Primo (Show Primo and linking to the help pages or slide with yellow circle & arrow).

To find out more about how best to use search rules see our video Using Primo: Planning a search and using Boolean operators, or contact members of library staff. More help can also be found online.