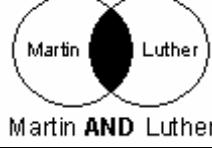
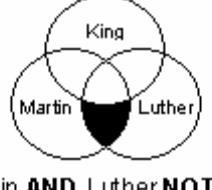
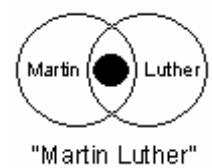


# Common Online Search Operators

Type of Operator/Function	Example	What You Get
<b>Boolean: OR</b>  <i>Equivalents:</i> Any (of these)		Retrieves all records with <i>either</i> Martin or Luther or both, in any order
<b>Boolean: AND</b>  <i>Equivalents:</i> All (of these), +		Retrieves all records with <i>both</i> Martin and Luther, in any order
<b>Boolean: NOT</b>  <i>Equivalents:</i> Without, -		Retrieves all records with <i>both</i> Martin and Luther in any order, but <i>not</i> King
<b>Phrase Searching</b> (Quotation Marks)  <i>Equivalents:</i> As A Phrase		Retrieves all records with <i>both</i> Martin and Luther, in a <i>particular order</i> only
<b>Truncation &amp; Wildcards</b>	econom*  wom?n  Edgar Al?an Poe  (can be a variety of symbols, but is usually ? and !)	Retrieves all records with words that begin with "econom" (i.e. economic, economics, economical, economist, etc.)  Retrieves all records with words that begin with "wom," end with "n," and have one letter in between (i.e. woman, women, and womyn); Retrieves all records with variations of Edgar Allan Poe's name
<b>Proximity: Near</b>	tax N5 reform	Retrieves all records with "tax" and "reform" if they are within five words of each other, <b>regardless of the order</b> in which they appear (i.e. you will get records with "tax reform" as well as "reform of the tax code")
<b>Proximity: Within</b>	tax W8 reform	Retrieves all records with "tax" and "reform" if they are within eight words of each other, and <b>in the order in which they were entered</b> (i.e. you will get records with "tax reform" but <u>not</u> "reform of the tax code")

# Online Search Strategies

## Analyze Your Topic

Start with your research question or topic. Break it into the main concepts, and try to identify relevant terms and phrases that describe what you need to look for. Use the following questions to help create a list of terms and phrases:

- What unique words, distinctive names, abbreviations, or acronyms are associated with your topic?
- Can you think of societies, organizations, or groups that might have information on your subject via their web pages?
- What words or phrases are likely to be in any record or web page on your topic?
- Can you think of synonyms, variant spellings, common misspellings, or equivalent terms?
- What broader or narrower terms could include your topic?

*Research Question:*

**Social comparison processes seem to infiltrate many group and intergroup phenomena. Why is this and how may they be exploited for practical ends in the work-place?**

*Possible Searches:*

“social comparison processes”

group **AND** phenomen\*  
intergroup **AND** phenomen\*

work **AND** place  
work-place  
employment

## Choose A Search Tool

Always try to begin your search with the most relevant resource for your research question or topic. After searching this resource thoroughly, move on to other resources to find different, broader, or more items. Keep these tips in mind as you use each search tool:

- What do you get from the search tool? Journal articles? Web pages? Full-text, citations, or both?
- What is the search tool actually searching? Records for items or the actual content of the items?
- If the search tool has a “keyword” search, what does it do? Where does it look for your terms or phrases?
- What search operators does the search tool use? What is the default operator?
- What are the ways you can limit your search? Date, domain, language, document type?
- What special features and/or searchable fields does the search tool have that make it unique?

## Narrowing & Broadening Your Search

### Narrow Searches

For fewer, more precise results, try a narrow search. Use more specific search terms and phrases. You will also want to apply any relevant limits, depending on the tool you are using. If the search tool has a thesaurus or index, use that to help you pick the most specific terms for your search. Be sure to look at any hyperlinks contained in the full record view in databases. Don't use an “OR” search --- this will give you much broader results.

### Broad Searches

For more, less precise results, try a broad search. Use less specific and alternative search terms and phrases. Try some “OR” searches. If you still aren't getting what you want, move on to another search tool, or try a narrow search.

## Other Search Tips

- Always check out the “help” or “search tip” information when using a new search tool --- usually, this information will let you know what search operators and special features can be used.
- Be aware that most search tools have a list of **stop words** (i.e. and, or, the, in, etc.) --- these terms are usually ignored unless you purposely include them by using quotation marks or a + in certain search tools.
- Many databases offer a **thesaurus** (often called an index) for you to use, usually for each searchable field --- this can help you find relevant terms and also help you check your terms/phrases before you use them.
- If you are using a database that gives you records in a results list, be sure to make use of the author and subject **hyperlinks** in the full record view --- these will often give you more ideas and results.