

A **search statement** is what you type into a library database. It is made up of **keywords**, combined using **Boolean Operators**: AND, OR<sup>1</sup>

For example, to learn about the impact of **smartphones** on **society**, you might build your search statement as follows:

<b>AND</b> – all keywords or concepts must be found in your list of results	<i>smartphone AND society</i>
<b>OR</b> – any keyword may be found <sup>2</sup>	<i>smartphone OR “mobile phone” OR “cell phone”</i>
<b>Quote marks</b> find two or more words always together	<i>“mobile phone”</i>
<b>Truncation</b> * captures any combination of letters to follow	<i>societ*<sup>3</sup></i>
<b>Brackets ( )</b> isolate a concept <sup>4</sup>	<i>smartphone AND (societ* OR cultur*)</i>

To end up with the following **search statement**<sup>5</sup>:

*(smartphone OR “mobile phone” OR “cell phone”) AND (societ\* OR cultur\*)*

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Searching **Google**<sup>6</sup>

To isolate your search to a specific <b>file type</b> (pdf, ppt, xls) <sup>7</sup> , enter filetype: and then the format	<i>filetype:pdf</i>
<b>Quote marks</b> find two or more words always together	<i>“human rights”</i>
To isolate your search to a <b>specific website</b> , type site: and then the URL <sup>8</sup>	<i>site:un.org</i>

For example, to find pdf documents mentioning human rights and poverty from the United Nations, try<sup>9</sup>:

*filetype:pdf “human rights” poverty site:un.org*

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<sup>1</sup> NOT is also a Boolean Operator, used to exclude a keyword: *smartphone NOT cancer*

<sup>2</sup> This is helpful to anticipate how different authors may refer to the same idea

<sup>3</sup> This will find *society, societies, societal, etc.*

<sup>4</sup> Brackets – and quote marks – are not needed for individual keywords

<sup>5</sup> Most databases have their own help guides containing additional operators including proximity, mentions, wildcard, etc.

<sup>6</sup> There are many search strategies available – a quick search online will turn up more

<sup>7</sup> Formal reports tend to be published as pdf; topic summaries in ppt; data saved as xls

<sup>8</sup> Isolating by domain also works: *site:org, site:ca, site:int*

<sup>9</sup> Notice that Boolean Operators are not used in Google