

# ProQuest Platform - Search Syntax: Quick Reference

By default the system will search:

- US and UK spellings (color vs colour)
- Singular and plurals (color, colors)
- Comparatives & superlatives (tall, taller, tallest)

(Note: These settings can be overridden if needed in the Preferences after signing in to MyResearch)

In summary:

- Platform URL: <https://search.proquest.com> (link usually works straight away if you are on campus)
- Boolean operators: **AND, OR, NOT**
- Default is **AND**: A search on **healthy eating** is the same as a search for **healthy AND eating**
- Proximity operators: **PRE/# (or p/#), NEAR/# (or n/#)**
- Truncation: Right and internal (**\* or ?**)
- To search for phrases put them in quotes, e.g.: "**healthy eating**" or use **p/0** e.g. **healthy p/0 eating**
- Use quotes to search an exact word variant, e.g.: "**colour**" will not match color.  
= quotes override default retrieval of word variations

Operator	Description	Example
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Note that *all* operators can also be used in lower case → **food OR nutrition = food or nutrition; china N/3 steel = china n/3 steel**

## Boolean Operators

<b>AND</b>	Retrieves all records that contain <b>all</b> of your words or phrases.	<b>food AND nutrition</b>
<b>OR</b>	Retrieves all records that contain <b>any</b> of your words or phrases.	<b>food OR nutrition</b>
<b>NOT</b>	Retrieves records that contain the first search term, but not the term following the NOT operator.	<b>nursing NOT shortage</b>

## Proximity Operators

<b>NEAR/# or N/#</b>	Allows up to the specified number of words to appear between the search terms in any order. Very useful to find documents in which both terms appear in the same sentence = context.	<b>china NEAR/3 steel</b> <b>media N/3 women</b>
<b>PRE/# or P/#</b>	Allows up to the specified number of words to appear between search terms in the order entered. You can also use <b>P/0</b> as a substitute to search for phrases. Benefit: Unlike when using quotation marks to search for phrases the plural and spelling variations are still applied here.	<b>nursing PRE/4 education</b> <b>financial P/4 futures</b> <b>colour P/0 organisation</b> → "colour organization" but also "color organizations"

By default, the operator processing order is: **PRE, NEAR, AND, OR, NOT** = from the most specific to the least and NOT always coming last.

We recommend using parentheses to structure your query so that it is always processed correctly e.g. **farm OR farming AND robotics OR automation** returns results that may only contain "farm" or only "automation" which is most likely not what was intended.

But **(farm OR farming) AND (robotics OR automation)** returns results in which both aspects - "farm" or "farming" as well as "robotics" or "automation" – are present.

## Wildcards and truncation

*Important: Please note that for the sorting of the results by relevancy truncated terms are ignored. Compare e.g. the sorting of results for **cultur\*** AND "**public health**" vs. (**culture or cultural or culturally**) AND "**public health**"*

Character	Description	Example
*	Right and middle truncation. Retrieves from zero to five characters. \$n or [*n] can be used to retrieve a larger or more limited number of characters.	<b>nurse*</b> → nurse, nurses, nursing <b>colo*r</b> → colour, color
\$n or [*n]	\$n and [*n] are equivalent operators used to denote the maximum number of characters you want to retrieve. Maximum is 20.	<b>mono\$3, mono[*3]</b> → monogam but not monomethylen
?	Replaces any single character, whether right or middle, but cannot replace a space. Multiple ? can be used to represent multiple characters.	<b>nurse?</b> → nurses, nursed, but not nurse <b>sm?th</b> → smith, smyth <b>ad???</b> → added, adult, adopt

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### Numerical Searching

<	Less than. Used for numeric fields such as publication year.	<b>YR(&lt;2005)</b>
>	Greater than.	<b>YR(&gt;2005)</b>
<=	Less than or equal to.	<b>YR(&lt;=2005)</b>
>=	Greater than or equal to.	<b>YR(&gt;=2005)</b>
-	Use a hyphen to indicate a range.	<b>YR(2005-2008)</b>

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## Search in specific fields

You can limit your search to specific fields to create very precise searches.

- Use the field code in capital or lower case followed by parentheses around the search terms to search only in a specific field, e.g. to search for "food" in the title use **Tl(food)** or **tl(food)**. Note that there is no space between the field code and the parentheses.
- You can find a list of field codes via the respective link in the advanced search or directly via the online help > Search syntax and field codes > Common Field Codes
- You may search multiple fields at once: Combine the field codes with commas (no spaces!). *When searching in full text databases it is a good strategy to use e.g. **AB, TI, SU(food)** to search a term specifically in the title, abstract or subject field as this will greatly increase the relevance of results.*
- The full query syntax is available within the field search, so you may create complex queries like: **AB, TI, SU((food or nutrition) n/5 health)** → searches in the abstract, title or subject for: 1) "food" and "health" with a max. distance of 5 words between them or 2) "nutrition" and "health" with a max. distance of 5 words.