

# Special Search Tips & Characters

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- For use with searching the Internet
  - some government databases (PubMed, NCJRS, Medline Plus, National Archives, etc.)
    - some library subscription databases (Academic Search Elite, JSTOR, etc.)
    - Use the Help File in each database to determine which characters are used
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## Stop words

These are words that are selected by the web site owners or database providers that will never be searched.

These will include **a, an, the, prepositions, etc.**  
This is a [short list](#).

## letter substitution use **?** or **\*** or **#** or **\_**

(These all do the same thing but each database or Internet search engine may only use 1 or 2 of these.)

S\*t or s?t or s#t will search for sit, sat, set

## Limiters

Use the [Advanced Search](#) features in databases to be able to limit your search to specific areas, by using **checkboxes** such as –

- time periods
- name of a journal
- type of document
- language

## Exact phrase “ ”

This is the most important use of characters.

Place double quotation marks around words that must be an exact phrase.

“civil war” will search for the words next to each other. Without the quotation marks, the database or search engine will search for all documents with the word civil and all words with the word war.



## Proximity search tools

These are a bit more complicated. [This web site](#) may explain it. Some databases include this feature – use the Help file in the database to see if this is possible where you are searching.

Terms such as **near** and **with**.

## for truncation (or stemming) of words use **\***

(This may not work on every database or with every search engine.)

Easy way to search for word in single or plural form, etc.

compt\* will search for computer, computers, computing