Truncation & Wildcard Tips
Alliant Library Home Page http://library.alliant.edu

Truncation is the search technique used to find variations and plurals of a word, using a common stem or root word.
Wildcard searching allows the substitution of one or more characters within a word to expand a search.
The number of characters substituted and the symbol used vary with the database, so here is a short list of what can be used where!   Don't forget to check the "Help" link available on all of the databases for additional hints not covered by this search guide.
Please note, capitalization is not important in any of these searches.

EBSCO Database Family

Use the wildcard and truncation symbols to create searches where there are unknown characters, multiple spellings or various endings. Neither the wildcard nor the truncation symbol can be used as the first character in a search term.

- The *wildcard* is represented by a question mark (**?**). To use the wildcard, enter your search terms and replace each unknown character with a **?**. EBSCO*host* finds all citations of that word with the **?** replaced by a letter.

For example, type **ne?t** to find all citations containing **neat**, **nest** or **next**. EBSCO*host* does not find net because the wildcard replaces a single character.

- *Truncation* is represented by an asterisk (*****). To use truncation, enter the root of a search term and replace the ending with an *****. EBSCO*host* finds all forms of that word.

For example, type **adoles*** to find the words **adolescent**, **adolescents** or **adolescence**.

Note: When searching for a title that ends in a question mark, the symbol should be removed from the search in order to ensure results will be returned.

Lexis/Nexis Academic

Using truncation (!) and wildcard (*) characters lets you easily combine or eliminate search terms, making your search simpler.

- Use an exclamation mark (**!**) to truncate a word to find all the words made by adding letters to the end of it. For example, acqui! would find variations on the term acquire such as *acquires, acquired, acquiring, and acquisition*.

  CAUTION: Use **!** only on unique roots; *fir!* will find *fired, firing,* and *fires*, but will also find *first*, which you may not want.

- Use an asterisk (*) as a "wildcard" to replace a character anywhere in a word, except the first character. Use one asterisk for each character you want to replace.

  Examples:
  wom*n would find woman and women
  bernst**n would find bernstein and bernstien

Use the asterisk to hold a space for variations in spelling at any point in a word.

Example: *bernst**n* would find both the *ei* and the *ie* spelling of the name

If you use asterisks at the end of a word, they do not all have to be filled, but may find up to the specified number of characters.

Example: *transplant*** would find transplant, transplanted, transplanter

Note: *transplant*** does not find *transplantation* or *transplanting* because only two wildcard characters are used. To find all the variations of *transplant*, use the ! wildcard character instead of the asterisk.

You cannot use a wildcard character (*) at the beginning of a search word.

ProQuest (including Dissertations and Theses)

<u>Searches:</u> If you're searching for a specific phrase, place your phrase in quotation marks (" "). This lets ProQuest know you're looking for documents where the words appear exactly in order.

If you're searching for information on animal hospitals, type the following:

"small animal hospital"

The following similar search yields very different results:

small animal AND hospital

The second search finds any document in which both "small animal" and "hospital" appear within 250-words of one another. These results could include documents about the use of dogs and cats in hospitals for therapy.

The first search find records where the words "small animal hospital" occur in that order, not separated by other words. Therefore, the results of the first search are likely to include only documents dealing with veterinary care.

If your phrase is only two words long, ProQuest will automatically treat it as a phrase (as if it were in quotation marks). If your phrase is three words or longer, you must use quotation marks. Otherwise, ProQuest will treat the phrase as if the words were joined by AND, for example "small AND animal AND hospital."

<u>Truncation and Wildcard Characters</u>
- The symbol * is used as a right-handed truncation character only; it will find all forms of a word. For example, searching for **econom*** will find "econom**y**", "econom**ics**", econom**ical**", etc.
- The symbol **?** is used to replace any single character, either inside the word or the right end of the word.
  ? cannot be used to begin a word.
  For example, searching for "**wom?n**" will find "wom**a**n" and "wom**e**n." Searching for "**t?re**" will find "t**i**re", "t**y**re", "t**o**re", etc