Proximity Operators

Proximity is the search technique used to find two words next to, near, or within a specified distance of each other within a document. Using such search operators may result in more satisfactory results that are more relevant to the research needs than by just typing in desired keywords. Some commands also control the terms' order of appearance. Desired words can be in any order, a specific order, or within a certain range of each other. The following examples demonstrate the differences for a select few of the databases offered by Alliant that have proximity functions. Please 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 family

You can use a *proximity search* to search for two or more words that occur within a specified number of words (or fewer) of each other in the databases. Proximity searching is used with a keyword or *Boolean* search.

The proximity operators are composed of a letter (**N** or **W**) and a **number** (to specify the number of words). The proximity operator is placed between the words that are to be searched, as follows:
- *Near Operator (N)* - **N5** finds the words if they are within *five words* of one another regardless of the order in which they appear.

For example, type **tax N5 reform** to find results that would match *tax reform* as well as *reform of income tax*.
- *Within Operator (W)* - In the following example, **W8** finds the words if they are within *eight words* of one another and in the order in which you entered them.

For example, type **tax W8 reform** to find results that would match *tax reform* but would not match *reform of income tax*.

Lexis/Nexis Academic

- **Using the W/n Connector --** Use the **W/n** connector to find documents with search words that appear within "n" words of each other. The value of "n" can be any number up to 255. Use W/n to join words and phrases that express parts of a single idea or to join closely-associated ideas. Words or phrases linked by W/n must be in the same segment (a specific part of a document). Either word may appear first. **Note:** W/n connectors cannot be used in combination with W/s or W/p connectors.

- **Using the PRE/n Connector --** Use the **PRE/n** connector to find documents in which the first search word precedes the second by not more than the stated number of words. As with W/n, both words must be in the same segment. PRE/n is primarily useful in situations where a different word order significantly alters meaning. For example, "summary judgment" is significantly different from "judgment summary."

- **Using the W/p (Within Paragraph) Connector --** Use the **W/p** connector to find documents with search words that appear within the same paragraph. You may also use W/p when you

want your search words to have a general relationship to each other. **Note:** W/p connectors cannot be used in combination with W/n connectors.

- **Using the W/s (Within Sentence) Connector --** Use the **W/s** connector to find documents with search words that appear within the same sentence. You may also use W/s when you want a close relationship between words without specifying an exact proximity. **Note:** W/s connectors cannot be used in combination with W/n connectors.

-
   Using the NOT W/n Connector -- The NOT W/n connector tells the research software to find documents in which the first search word is found. The second word need not be in the document, but if it is, it cannot be within 'n' words of the first word.

- **Using the NOT W/para Connector --** The NOT w/para connector tells the research service to find documents in which the terms you specify appear, but not within the same paragraph.

ProQuest (including Dissertations and Theses)

[Note: Two words are treated as a fixed phrase, unless **w** is used between them.]
<u>Any order of 3 or more terms</u>: words in phrases longer than 2 words are searched in any order and anywhere within the field specified. If they must be within a particular range of each other, surround the phrase with double quotation marks " ", or use the **w** command as follows:

- **w/#** (# being any number from 1-25) between three or more words forces them to be within a specified number (#) of words of each other.   Find documents where these words are <u>within</u> some number of words apart (either before or after). Use when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text."
   Example: computer W/3 careers

- **not w/#** forces the words to be a <u>minimum</u> of x words apart.   Find documents where these words appear but are <u>not within</u> some number of words apart (either before or after). Use when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text."
   Example: computer NOT W/2 careers

- **pre**/# forces the words to be within a x number of each other, with the first term always first in the phrase order   Find documents where the first word appears some number of words <u>before</u> the second word. Use when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text."
   Example: world pre/3 web

- **W/PARA f**inds documents where these words are <u>within</u> the same <u>paragraph</u> (within approx. 1000 characters). Use when searching for keywords within "Document Text."
   Example: internet W/PARA education

- **W/DOC f**ind documents where all the words appear <u>within</u> the <u>document</u> text. Use W/DOC in place of AND when searching for keywords within "Citation and Document Text" or "Document Text" to retrieve more comprehensive results.
   Example: Internet W/DOC education