

BETTER SEARCHING USING TRUNCATION

You're doing a research project, let's say on farming, but you also want to find sources on farmers and farms. You could do separate searches for each term, or you could use the Boolean operator OR and type in farming OR farmers OR farms.

But that's inefficient. There's a better way to capture all the variations in the word without typing them all in. That's truncation, a tool to make searching more efficient. Truncation is the use of a symbol to find variants of a word in your searches.

Let's try this in Omni, the search tool on the library home page. If I search for urban*, in my results I get urban, urbanization, and other words that have 'urban' as their root word.

Truncation is also good for searching singular and plural forms at the same time, or finding terms with variant spellings. Put the truncation symbol after the root, where the spellings begin to vary.

You need to be careful with truncation though. You could end up with lots of variations you don't want or expect. For example, if you're looking for Canada or Canadian, you can type in canad* and get good results. But if you type in can*, you will also find lots of sources with words like cancer, candidate, and cannabis. For truncation to work well, the root word you use needs to be distinct enough to give you useful results.

While the truncation symbol for Omni and most of our popular databases is an asterisk sign "*", truncation symbols are not standardized and can vary from database to database. Common symbols include a question mark and dollar sign. Check the database help files to see which symbol is used in your database.

If you have any questions, ask us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus.

Let us know if this video was useful to you, by giving us some feedback at library.wlu.ca/videofeedback.