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University of Bridgeport
Wahlstrom Library
126 Park Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604

Research Skills
Parentheses & Nesting

For further research assistance access the Wahlstrom Library website via the myUB Portal.

Ask a Librarian via Chat: Available when the Library is open through the Library website.

E-mail a Librarian: reference@bridgeport.edu

Call a Librarian: 203-576-4747

Walk-ins welcome!
Use parentheses to...

Group related words together.

Example:
(drug OR substance) AND abuse AND public policy

Why you may want to use it while searching

(1) Group synonyms together.

Example:
(abuse OR addiction) AND drug AND (public AND policy)

The ‘OR’ between ‘drug’ and ‘substance’ tells the database you must have one of those two keywords, but you’ll take either one. That’s good, because ‘drug abuse’ and ‘substance abuse’ are essentially the same thing.

When you put synonyms in your search query and don’t use parentheses, the database doesn’t know you consider them synonyms. Using parentheses is one way to tell the search engine exactly what you want to find, and how you want it to look for your keywords. This leads to more accurate results.

(2) Tell the search engine what terms to look for before looking for anything else in the search.

Example:
(Shakespeare AND Marlowe) AND authorship AND controversy

Here is an example of a search in Academic Search Premier:
abuse OR addiction AND drug AND public AND policy = 241,991 results ← Lots of extraneous results
(abuse OR addiction) AND drug AND public policy = 4,246 results ← More accurate results!

See the difference?