

CONSTRUCTING ONLINE SEARCHES

- 1 Choose the appropriate individual database to work in, or use MegaSearch.
 - Each individual database has its own Search template, as well as an Advanced Search. Each enables you to search through that database alone.
 - MegaSearch enables you to search across several databases at once.

- 2 Establish the concept you wish to search for - it is helpful to think of this in terms of the **outcome** you require.

For example, if you wanted information on environmental matters connected with the development of supermarket complexes, with specific instances of case law, you would choose the **Environmental** collection, and then *Brookers Resource Management*, *Environmental Cases* and *Salmon Environmental Cases* databases, and your key words would be **develop supermarket environment**.

- 3 Identify the key word(s) from that concept. Try to avoid getting tangled up with too many words, or words that are too specific or unusual, unless you are 100% certain that is the word you are searching for.

Tips: Try the obvious first. If you're looking for information on Picasso, enter the word *Picasso* rather than *painters*.

Use words likely to appear on a site with the information you want. The words *sleep job* is likely to get better results than *sleeping on the job*.

Make key words as specific as possible. The words *eating disorder* gets more relevant results than *digestion problems*.

- 4 Search "operators" are available to help link your concepts or ideas, and to expand or narrow your search. You can use these operators alone or in combination with one another. See "Search Operators" for a list.
- 5 Certain words can't be used as operators as they are held in reserve so they can link terms together (**and or not**). Symbols (* " " % / @) are also used to link terms. The system does not recognise punctuation (eg hyphens or apostrophes so you should omit these from any search. See examples below for how to use the operators.

6 Think about how your terms might be positioned in relation to one another, for example:

- within same general area of text
- directly beside one another
- in a defined location such as within a piece of legislation, a commentary item, or in case law

7 If you are formulating your own search, enter your search terms, then narrow or expand your search by choosing an "operator" to link the terms together.

Some examples follow. All searches are performed document by document. A document is a logical "chunk" of information. It might be a section of a piece of legislation with its associated historical, editorial and commentary notations; or it might be a case.

*If you wanted to search for all examples of the words **radioactive** and **substance**, in any order, in a single document, enter as follows:*

radioactive substance

*If you wanted to search for all examples of the words **radioactive** and **substance**, in a single document, where those words appeared beside one another, enter as follows:*

"radioactive substance"

*If you wanted to search for all examples of the words **radioactive** and **substance**, in a single document, in the order entered, as well as derivatives of those words, within a certain number of words of one another, enter as follows:*

"radioactiv* substance*/X

Note: X = number of words

*If you wanted to search for all examples of the words **radioactive** and **substance**, in a single document, in any order, as well as synonyms for the word **substance**, within a certain number of words of one another, enter as follows:*

"radioactive substance\$"@X

Note: X = number of words

*If you wanted to search for all examples of the words **radioactive** and **material** or **substance**, in a single document, including derivatives of all those words, anywhere within a document rather than within a certain proximity of one another, enter as follows:*

radioactiv* and material* or substance*

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