Boolean Searching

AND
You can use the word ‘AND’ to link ideas together.
For example: to find information on how mental health might affect incidences of juvenile delinquency try searching for:

Mental health AND Juvenile Delinquency

OR
You can expand your search to include words with the same or similar meanings by using ‘OR’.
For example: to find information about grieving people you might try:

Grief OR Loss
NOT

You can exclude ideas or words from your search using NOT. This is useful if one or more of your search words are also used in a completely different context.

For example: If you had searched for play theory but had lots of results about “foul play” theories, you could search again trying:

Play theory NOT Foul

Articles about play theory

Articles using the word foul

Articles about foul play!

Parentheses (brackets)

Remember BODMAS from primary school? The same thing works for boolean searching. You can use parenthensis to build searches. The computer will look at what is in the brackets first, and then deal with what is outside the brackets. This allows you to use the OR term inside the brackets to group a single idea made up or two or more words that mean the same thing, and then link the ideas by using the AND term between the brackets.

For example: if you are looking for information on how divorce affects children you could try:

(divorce OR separation) AND (child OR children)

This will allow you to search for 2 different concepts (divorce, and the children involved) at the same time, but without limiting yourself to particular keywords when the words themselves don’t matter as much as the concepts.