HOW DO I

CHOOSE KEYWORDS FOR MY SEARCH?

$(a+b)^2 = a^2+b^2+2ab$

Does increased use of hand sanitizer or hand washing by health care personnel reduce cross-infection rates in U.S. hospitals?

First, write the research question you plan to explore.

Be aware that the question may change as you learn more about the topic; this is a normal part of the process

Does increased use of **hand sanitizer** or **hand washing** ✋
by **health care personnel** ⊕
reduce **cross-infection rates** 🩺
in **U.S. hospitals?** 🏢

Look for the key concepts in your research question.

Look for nouns:
⊕ People
🏢 Places
🩺✋ Things

They'll be the most helpful search terms.

hand washing

handwashing

hand sanitizers

hand hygiene

health care personnel

medical personnel

physicians

nurses

cross-infection

hospital acquired infections

disease control

microbial contamination

AND   **OR**   **NOT**

+   **OR**   🚫

Once you've come up with your list of keywords and related terms, link them with the appropriate Boolean operators.

Boolean operators define relationships between search terms and can broaden or narrow your search.

The three Boolean operators are AND, OR, and NOT

nurses **and** hand washing **and** cross infection

Use AND to link search terms when you want to narrow or focus your results.

AND tells the database to bring back results that include **all** of these terms.

Boolean operators

As you can see from our search results, searching for nurses has thousands more results than searching for nurses and hand washing. Linking terms with AND narrowed our search.

Nurses **or** physicians **or** health care personnel

OR

OR

Use OR to link synonyms or related terms.

This will broaden your search and tells the database to bring back results that include **any** of these terms.

Boolean operators

You can see the difference OR makes in our search results. Adding additional terms for nurses, linked by OR, retrieves many more search results than searching for nursing alone.

Left panel

EBSCOhost

Searching: **Specific Databases**, Show all | Choose Databases by Subject

nurses	Select a Field (option... ▼
AND ▼		Select a Field (option... ▼
AND ▼		Select a Field (option... ▼

Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History ▶

Did you mean: nurse

Refine Results   **Search Results:** 1 - 50 of 192,267

Right panel

EBSCOhost

Searching: **Specific Databases**, Show all | Choose Databases by Subject

nurses	Select a Field (option... ▼
OR ▼	physicians	Select a Field (option... ▼
OR ▼	health care personnel	Select a Field (option... ▼

Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History ▶

Refine Results   **Search Results:** 1 - 50 of 551,882

OR   OR

hand washing **not** masks

🚫

NOT is used to exclude unrelated terms from your search results.

Use NOT sparingly—an article about masks may contain information about handwashing that could be relevant to your research.

(hand washing or hand hygiene)

AND

(nurses or doctors or healthcare personnel)

If you're using multiple Boolean operators in your search, place parentheses around search terms linked by OR to ensure that your search is interpreted correctly.
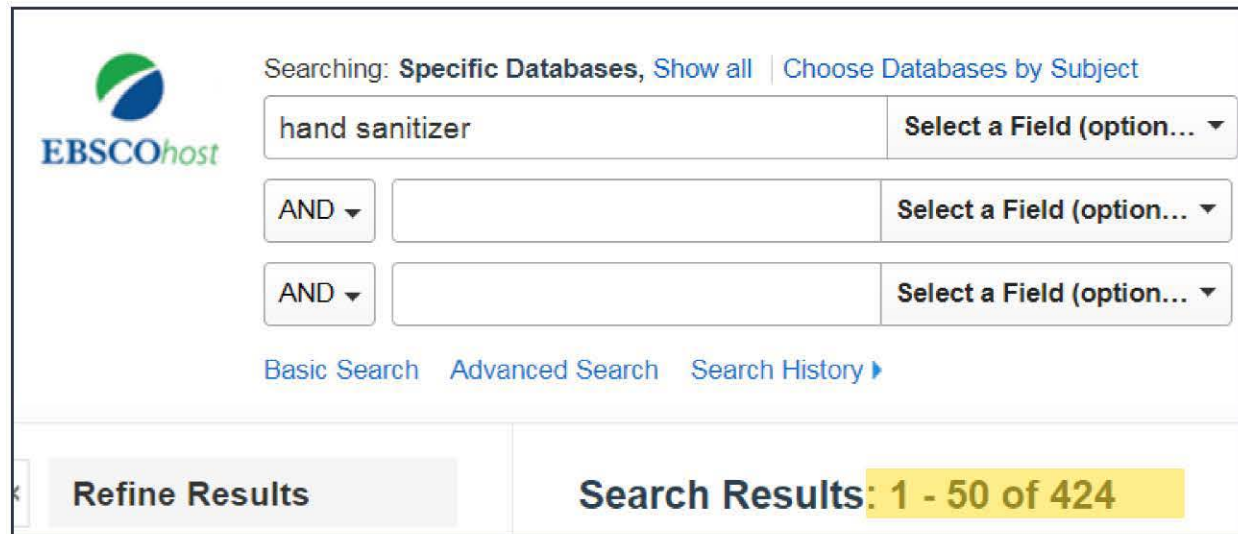
"hand hygiene"
"hand sanitizers"

Quotation marks keep phrases together.
They tell the database to search for those exact terms, in that exact order.

Without quotation marks

With quotation marks

Searching: Specific Databases, Show all | Choose Databases by Subject

EBSCOhost

hand sanitizer — Select a Field (option... ▼)

AND ▼ — Select a Field (option... ▼)

AND ▼ — Select a Field (option... ▼)

Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History ▶

Refine Results   **Search Results:** 1 - 50 of 424

Searching: Specific Databases, Show all | Choose Databases by Subject
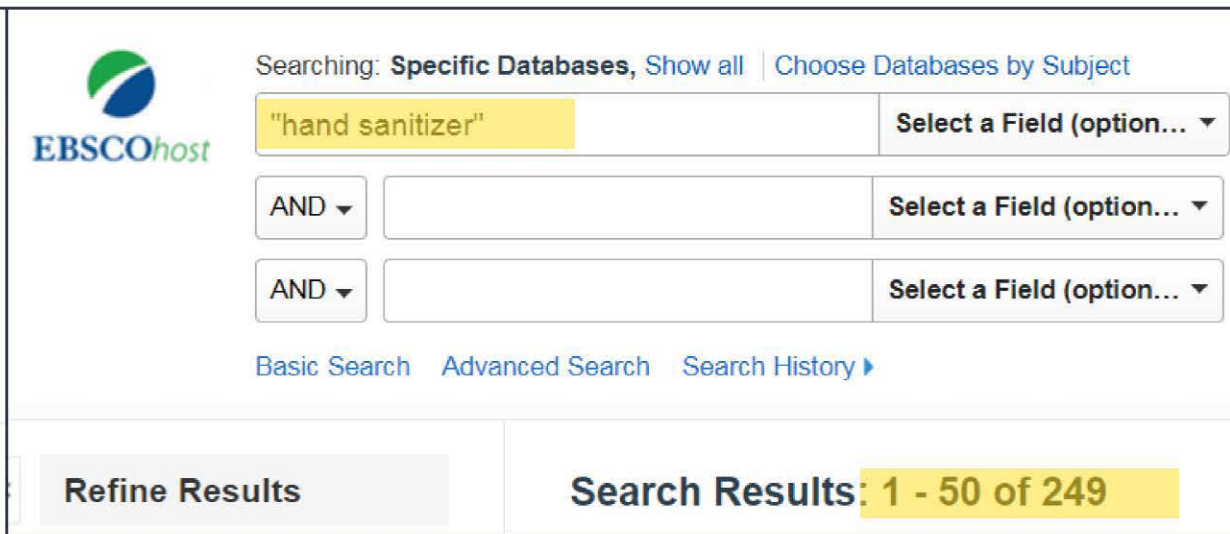
EBSCOhost

"hand sanitizer" — Select a Field (option... ▼)

AND ▼ — Select a Field (option... ▼)

AND ▼ — Select a Field (option... ▼)

Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History ▶

Refine Results   **Search Results:** 1 - 50 of 249

A search for hand sanitizer without quotation marks **will** retrieve materials on hand sanitizers.

However, it will also find and retrieve references with the single word hand and the single word sanitizer (hand tools, food sanitizer, etc.) Using quotation marks will help **narrow** your search results.

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