How can I search for an exact phrase only?

In today’s EBSCOhost, the Boolean/Phrase search mode is customizable by your institution’s administrator. The default proximity setting for the Boolean/Phrase search mode is N5 (near 5). If you want to search for an exact phrase when proximity is set to N5, quotation marks are necessary.

If your administrator has set the Boolean/Phrase search mode with proximity W0 (within 0), quotation marks are necessary because EBSCOhost automatically searches for plural and possessive forms of terms when they are not used.

If you have questions about how your account is configured, see your institution’s administrator.

In addition, EBSCO databases also include field codes, searchable tags that you can use to narrow your search. EBSCOhost uses two-character abbreviations for field codes such as SU (Subject) AU (Author), etc. For example, if you wanted to search for ‘Story of an hour’, EBSCOhost would assume you want to search using the AN (Accession Number) field code rather than the word ‘an’. In this situation, you should use quotation marks—“story of an hour”.

To find out what field codes are used within a database, click the Help icon “?” to the right of the Find field. The Help window will appear. Scroll to the bottom of the menu bar on the left until you see the Database Help heading. Click the database name and the Database Help Screen will appear. Click the Searchable Fields link. All the field codes are listed with detailed explanations of what they mean.

For more information on the proximity settings for the Boolean/Phrase search mode, see the following FAQ: What are the Precision Operator and Precision Distance options in the EBSCOadmin Search Modes settings?

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