

Archive Search Cribsheet 1 - Simple Search

BBC Archive Search

This cribsheet covers everything you need to know about running simple searches in Archive Search. We recommend you read it before you use the system for the first time.



"Can I not just enter my search term in the search box and hit return?"

Yes, you can - you can search for anything that way; programme titles, subjects, programme numbers, people etc. But, if you aren't getting the results you expect, or you're getting too many results consider the following three things:

- 1) Have you got your search options toggled to 'Or' or 'And'?
- 2) Are you using quote marks?
- 3) Have you combined your search with any of the filters?

"What's the And / Or toggle?"

The And / Or toggle is to the right of the search box and it will have a big impact on your search results if you are searching on more than one word:

 Search using AND <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/>	This will return search results which contain all of the words you have searched for
 Search using OR <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/>	This will return search results which contain any of the words you have searched for

So, for example if you searched for *Reform of the house of lords* with the toggle switched to 'Or' you would get results for anything which had the words 'house', or 'reform', or 'lords' etc; most of them unlikely to be the kind of results you would be wanting!

Switching the toggle to AND will search instead for anything that contained all of those words.

"So what's the point in the OR search?"

Searching with 'Or' is great when you are trying to find something that might be referred to in different ways. For example the latin and common names for a plant or animal (Cat or Feline), and things that have just ended up with two names (Covid or Coronavirus)

It's also useful if you want to broaden a search that hasn't returned anything useful - instead of searching on *Pets* try searching on *Dogs Cats* with the toggle switched to Or.


"Ok, but my search is still returning too many results and most of them don't look that relevant"

In that case, if you're searching on a phrase, or more than one word, try using "quote marks". This will restrict your search to look for that exact phrase or sentence. Consider the example above where we searched for *Reform of the house of lords*. Even with the toggle switched to AND this would still return results with, for example, the phrase *Reform of the House of Commons discussed in the House of Lords*. Searching for *"Reform of the House of Lords"* in quote marks would focus your search on returning only results that contained that exact phrase.


"Ok, that's fine for simple searches, but I want to do something more complex - how would I search for a subject combined with a programme title?"


You can combine more than one phrase search in the search box - so for example you could search for *"Swiss Cheese Plant" "Gardeners' World"* with the toggle switched to AND to find any episodes of Gardeners' World with Swiss Cheese Plants.







But if you wanted to really cover all bases and include the Latin Name for the Swiss Cheese Plant you just need to start using some of the search filters. For this example you could type *"Swiss Cheese Plant" "Monstera"* with the toggle switched to OR, and then type *"Gardeners' World"* in the title search box.


Search All 


"Monstera" "Swiss Cheese Plant"


 Search using OR



Show all types  from all series  of all genres  , transmission date  from all time  in all qualities 

Title: 

 Less

Search in Title	Search in Description	Search in Synopsis	Supplier type
<input type="text" value="Gardeners' World"/>	<input type="text" value="Enter search term"/>	<input type="text" value="Enter search term"/>	<div>All Supplier Types </div>

Using the advanced search filters will really power-up your search - they are all very intuitive but to use them effectively we have a few tips about what they cover and how best to use them. This is all covered in our next cribsheet which will include things like:

"How do I restrict my search to a date?"

"How do I search for a person?"

"How do I search for something someone has said?"

"How do I find Radio content only?"