

Boolean Search for Social Media Monitoring

Focus on results that matter for your business

_____ OR _____

OR _____ AND _____

OR link: _____

AND NOT _____ OR _____

AND country: _____

AND lang: _____

FROM _____

Boolean search enables users to create more specific queries for more accurate results and better reporting. By using your keywords along with Boolean operators you can either restrict or broaden your search expressions, and improve your results. Thankfully, all [Awario](#) plans come with a Boolean search mode. In this guide, you'll learn how to create flexible Boolean queries for precise social media monitoring.

These 4 steps will help you nail Boolean search:

①

Research
keywords

②

Learn Boolean
operators

③

Avoid common
mistakes

④

Iterate

Research keywords

Before playing around with your first query, it's a good idea to get a clear understanding of what keywords should be included, because the tool will ignore lots of relevant results otherwise.

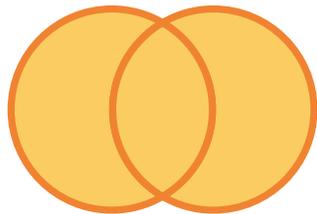
It's extremely important to research all alternate brand spellings, common typos, and acronyms - in the example below, you can see that the most popular brand name alternatives are listed, along with relevant social media handles and a hashtag.

```
1 M&Ms OR M&M OR M&M's OR #mms OR @mms OR  
2 @mmsuk OR @mmschocolate
```

Learn Boolean operators

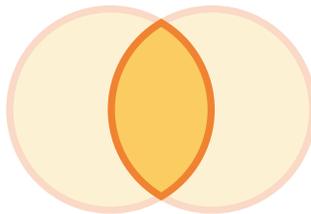
Major Boolean logic operators that any social monitoring tool has are **OR**, **AND**, and **NOT**.

OR



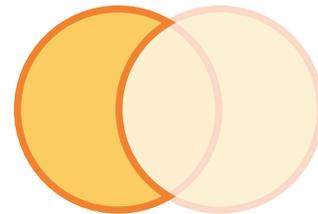
black **OR** white

AND



black **AND** white

AND NOT



black **AND NOT** white

In addition, platforms can go beyond these basics to fulfill more specific needs of businesses, though not all will offer each variant. Here, for example, are the operators offered by Awario:

Quotes

To search for a specific word combination, or an exact phrase match, you can list the term/s in quotation marks. If you place the plus sign before the quoted phrase, the app will respect special characters and punctuation marks, while double plus before the quoted phrase will ensure the app also considers letter case.

```
1 ++"The Boring Company"
```

OR

This operator searches for either or both listed keywords. Note that all operators can be used multiple times within a query. In this example, we'll add a social media handle, which is spelled as a single word. This will enable us to monitor conversations where people tag the company. Then we can also add the 'TBC' acronym - it's not used as often, but we'll include it for the sake of an example.

```
1 ++"The Boring Company" OR @boringcompany
2 OR TBC
```

AND

Predictably enough, the query above will bring lots of irrelevant mentions, as 'TBC' has a huge amount of full forms. The 'AND' operator will help us make sure that the results include a specific keyword or a group of keywords together with those we already have.

```
1 ++"The Boring Company" OR @boringcompany
2 (TBC AND Musk)
```

I've added the last name of the company's CEO - this will show us only results where 'TBC' is mentioned in the same post as Musk.

AND NOT

The **AND NOT** operator is used to add negative keywords to your search. For example, let's say you want to stop getting conversations where people discuss the fact that the company sells flamethrowers.

```
1  (++)"The Boring Company" OR @boringcompany
2  OR (TBC AND Musk)) AND NOT flamethrower
```

Parentheses

The next step in improving our search is grouping the keywords and assigning special keyword formats to them. It's pretty straightforward here - to group a couple of keywords, you can list them in brackets. For example, let's imagine we want to add more negative keywords using **OR**. We have to be sure to group them, otherwise, the **OR** operator will be applied to the rest of the query.

```
1  (++)"The Boring Company" OR @boringcompany
2  OR (TBC AND Musk))
3  AND NOT (flamethrower OR "fire extinguisher")
```

country, lang, and FROM

Within Boolean search, you can also filter your results by country, language, or social media platform with the help of **country**, **lang**, and **FROM** respectively. The first two can be used together with the **AND** operator, while **FROM** is used independently.

So let's say we need to get mentions from Australia and New Zealand in English, and we want to get mentions from Twitter, Reddit, and Facebook. The search expression would be the following:

```
1 ((++"The Boring Company" OR @boringcompany
2 OR (TBC AND Musk))
3 OR link:"*.boringcompany.com/*"
4 AND NOT (flamethrower OR "fire extinguisher")
5 AND country:AU,NZ
6 AND lang:en
7 FROM twitter,reddit,facebook
```

link

Treating links separately in addition to your keywords is important for several purposes:

- Getting metrics for a particular web page and interacting with users who share this page online
- Picking up mentions where a website's name is different from target keywords
- Collecting mentions which link to a website but don't contain a mention of its name
- Excluding web pages linking to your own website for link-building purposes

The `link` operator will help us with these tasks.

Let's include the link to the website just to make sure we don't lose any mentions where the anchor text is different from the URL.

```
1 ((++"The Boring Company" OR +"@boringcompany"  
2 OR (TBC AND Musk))  
3 OR link:"*.boringcompany.com/*"  
4 AND NOT (flamethrower OR "fire extinguisher")  
5 AND country:AU,NZ  
6 AND lang:en  
7 FROM twitter,reddit,facebook  
8 UNION  
9 near/50:++"Boring",bricks  
10 FROM twitter,facebook,youtube
```

Note that adding an asterisk before and after a URL makes sure that links to all subdomains and pages of a website will be found as well.

near/n

This operator specifies the closeness of your keywords to each other — this means that your search app will pull in mentions where keywords appear within a number of words away from each other.

Let's imagine that we've decided to monitor news about 'Boring Bricks' produced by the company from the examples above. Quick research shows that, in news report, these words generally appear in a different order and the distance between them is also different. Let's choose the safe distance of, say, 50 words and see if we get good results on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube.

```
1 near/50:++"Boring",bricks
2 FROM twitter,facebook,youtube
```

To make sure we don't get irrelevant mentions, we'll look for those starting with capital letters only.

UNION

UNION helps in combining multiple Boolean expressions into one. This makes sense if you want to merge a couple of search expressions with completely different parameters and different sources into one expression, i.e. get all results into one feed.

As you can see, the last two examples above have different sources. If we want to merge both expressions, we'll need help from the **UNION** operator.

Avoid common mistakes

Capitalize AND, OR, AND NOT

This one is common. Keep in mind that a query won't be correct until you capitalize the **AND**, **OR**, **AND NOT**, and 'FROM' operators.

Group keywords

If a query is (or seems to be) ready, but the results are completely the opposite of what you expected, the problem is most likely the grouping. Remember that if not grouped, **AND** or **AND NOT** are applied to the closest keyword only.

Choose suitable operators

Languages are flexible, and the same phrase may be constructed differently depending on its place in the sentence. For that purpose, the proximity operator 'near/n' will often do a better job than putting a phrase into quotes.

Don't forget that keywords aren't case-sensitive

They aren't, and they ignore symbols and capital letters unless you specifically tell them not to, using such keyword formats as +“h&m” or even ++“H&M”.

Iterate

It's difficult to foresee all the possible outcomes of queries, as a brand abbreviation may be also used by another company, or an initial negative keywords list might not be complete. But the good news is that queries can always be edited and extended. My advice here is iterate, blacklist, remove, add terms, and to experiment with different operators.

Try Boolean yourself with a free Awario trial

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