Scopus: Search Tips Part 1 (fuzzy phrases and exact phrases)

Step 1.
This tutorial shows you how to use ‘fuzzy phrases’ and ‘exact phrases’ within Scopus, using an example of ‘Marine Ecology’.

A search for ‘marine ecology’ will bring up a number of results. However, typing this will instruct Scopus to look for the words ‘marine’ and ‘ecology’ no matter where they are positioned within the abstract, title or keywords. E.G. It may fine ‘marine’ in the title and ‘ecology’ in the keywords but not the phrase ‘Marine Ecology’.

This means you may get a lot of irrelevant results, as shown below.

Step 2.
We can instruct Scopus to look for “Marine Ecology” as a phrase, by using quotation marks around the phrase, E.G. “your search”.

This will ensure that only articles where the word ‘marine’ and the word ‘ecology’ are locked together as a phrase, are retrieved. The results are shown below.
Step 3.

It is important to note that Scopus searches tend to do a number of adjustments automatically.

Scopus will automatically disregard accented characters, to allow use of regular characters in their place. It will also account for ‘lemmatisation’, or variants of words such as ‘wide’ and ‘wider’ or plurals instead of singular. US and UK spelling variants are also automatically taken into account. See Elsevier’s slide on this below. Use of phrase marks “ ” is known as ‘fuzzy phrasing’ because it still allows these variants to be automatically included in the search.

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_Research Intelligence_

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**Know what Scopus search does automatically (apart from being case-insensitive)**

**Accented characters**: work with or without the accent included  
*Example*  Dvořák and dvorak both return the same results

**Lemmatisation**: means that singular and plural forms, and well as adjectives, will be found if you type any of the variants.  
*Examples*: attack and attacks; wide and wider

**Equivalents**: will find the equivalent terms/symbols  
*Example*: behaviour and behavior
Step 4.

To complete an exact search instead of a fuzzy search, you can use curly brackets {} around your search instead of phrase marks “””. This prevents Scopus from including the above variants within your search. However, only use these where it is absolutely necessary, E.G. systematic literature searches. You may otherwise discount literature from your search that would be useful to discover.

Step 5.

For more information on search tips within Scopus, you can click on ‘Search Tips’ in the right hand side of the document search screen.