Most library catalogs, article databases, and other online information retrieval systems allow for a symbol to be used at the end of a word to find items that have been listed with variant endings of that word. This is known as truncation. You may want to use truncation when you are looking for a word with different spellings, or different forms of a word, such as singular or plural forms and different endings. Truncating a word will automatically broaden your search for information and insure that you retrieve all items containing a form of the word.

The asterisk mark (*) is the most commonly used truncation symbol.

Example: Politic* will retrieve

- politic
- politics
- political
- politically
- politician
- politicians

Some online systems provide automatic truncation which means that you don't have to type the asterisk mark. The College of DuPage Library Catalog has automatic truncation.

Be careful using truncation! For example, if you truncate the word “cat” in order to get everything on “cats”, you will also find items on cataclysm, catacomb, catalepsy, catalog, etc.