Human Boolean

Outcome:
Students create appropriate and effective search strings for database searches

Steps:
1. Explain that to search using the library search tools, students need to learn a technique called keyword searching. We're going to act out how it works.

2. Librarian explains the following scenario:
   I am searching for a student who left something really cool in the Library. I don't know the student's name, but I do have a description that was given to me by another librarian. Have students all stand and then sit down as criteria no longer apply to them.

3. Write terms on board again horizontally as you go through the exercise:

   > student   jeans OR khakis   "blue shirt"   glasses NOT sunglasses

4. Change criteria in order to end up with one student..

5. Summarize to class: "If I were to type the search we just acted out, it would look like this." Go back and add operators and parentheses for nesting. Talk about how each operator functions by prompting questions for each chunk (e.g., let's talk about "OR." Will my results contain jeans? Khakis? Both?"). Also mention to the students that you typically don't add "NOT" to a search string until after you start your search and see your results set.

6. Also add some other terms by prompting: E.g., "I might describe [last student standing] as guy/woman. Instead of saying 'guy/woman' what else could I have said that would mean the same thing?" Add "OR" between each additional term beneath guy/woman. **I like to use gender as an example because it provides an easy way to demonstrate the use of "OR" with synonyms. To avoid assigning a gender to the student and potentially ostracizing transgender or gender-variant students, I find it to be a good idea to specify that I am making an assumption about the student's gender identity, which may or may not be accurate.**

7. Ask the students how the terms are grouped together, or which concept is inside each parentheses (pants, eyewear, gender, etc.). Stress the importance of grouping together terms that relate to a similar concept.

Practice: Students complete worksheet on their topic or one given on the board.

Assessment:

Students create a Boolean search string using the Keyword Worksheet. The search should use BOTH Boolean operators (AND and OR). Criteria: There should be a search, and it should use the operators correctly and the terms should be logical.