Advanced and Broad Search Tips

Attention! If you do not have an understanding of controlled vocabulary or searching in specific fields, such as title or abstract, please read the “Narrow Search Tips” document before continuing.

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Search for Keywords in the Title or Abstract OR Controlled Vocabulary

- Searching for keywords in the title or abstract of articles can help you catch articles that haven’t been indexed yet. On the downside, it may also catch articles that mention your keyword, but aren’t really about that topic.
- If you’re retrieving few results it’s worthwhile to try searching with keywords as well as controlled vocabulary words to see if you pick up any new publications.
- In the example below you can see that I’ve searched for synonym keyword phrases for myocardial infarction in the title/abstract of articles OR for the mesh term for myocardial infarction.
- If doing this pulls in too many results, you can always go back to searching by MeSH term/controlled vocabulary alone.

EXAMPLE IN PUBMED: ("myocardial infarction"[Title/Abstract] OR "heart attack"[Title/Abstract] OR "Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh]) = 192,861
**Truncate***

- Truncation allows you to search for variants of a word. It may help you find more articles if you haven’t been searching for plurals or other versions of a word.
- In most database platforms you **truncation by adding an asterisk (*)** after a word, i.e. `word*`.
  - Some database platforms allow you to use the dollar sign ($) to truncate, but this is less common.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database/Platform</th>
<th>Truncation Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PubMed</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Platform</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINAHL</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovid Platform (not used at LMU)</td>
<td>$ or *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Be careful!** Be sure to truncate from an appropriate root.
  - For example, if I wanted articles that mentioned a cat or cats, it would **not be wise** to truncate `cat*`. Why? I would retrieve results on catalogs, catastrophes, catatonia, etc., as well as cat/cats. In this case it is better to search for (cat OR cats).
  - We can truncate a word like `infarction*` because we should only retrieve results for infarction or infarctions.

- **Special cases: Truncating Phrases**
  - Usually, when you use phrases, you must put quotation marks around them.
  - The exception to this is if you’re truncating!
  - Different databases have different ways of truncating phrases:
    - **PubMed**
      - Truncate two or three word phrases without quotes. Search for myocardial infarction*. Search for acute myocardial infarction*.
    - **ProQuest platform:**
      - Don’t truncate phrases! Search for (“myocardial infarction” OR “myocardial infarctions”)
    - **CINAHL**
      - Truncate two word phrases without quotes. Search for myocardial infarction*

**EXAMPLE IN PUBMED:** `myocardial infarction*[Title/Abstract] OR heart attack*[Title/Abstract] OR "Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh]) = 194,882`
Use Alternate Spellings

- British and American spellings of some words are different. If you only search for the American spelling of a word you may miss other relevant English language articles.
- If you are going to add in keywords to a controlled vocabulary search, try to add in both the British and American spelling of the words where relevant.
- Below I’ve searched for various spellings of pediatric in the title or abstract of articles in PubMed.

**EXAMPLE IN PUBMED:** (pediatric*[Title/Abstract] OR paediatric*[Title/Abstract] OR "Pediatrics"[Mesh]) = 228,915
Search in Multiple Databases

- If you’re working on a search that still isn’t coming up with many results even though you’ve added keywords, truncation, and alternate spellings of words there are two things you can do:
  - You may broaden your search by removing some AND-ed terms or adding more OR-ed keywords
  - You may search in multiple databases.

- When you search in PubMed you’re searching the database Medline. Here at LMU, some other databases to try include:
  - Cochrane Library
  - CINAHL
  - SPORTDiscus
  - ScienceDirect Health & Life Sciences College Edition
  - ProQuest Health & Medical Complete

- Remember, when you move your search from one database into another, you must translate the search so that it is interpreted correctly by the new database. You may do this by using the advanced search builder provided by most databases. (See Narrow Search handout for more instructions on where to find advanced search builders.)

**EXAMPLE:** Search translated from PubMed to CINAHL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PubMed</th>
<th>CINAHL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Myocardial Infarction&quot;[Mesh] AND &quot;Hypertension&quot;[Mesh] AND (&quot;mm Hg&quot;[tiab] OR mmHg[tiab] OR &quot;millimeter of mercury&quot;[tiab]) AND (&quot;2004/02/15&quot;[PDat] : &quot;2014/02/11&quot;[PDat]) AND Eng[lang] = 90 Results</td>
<td>(MH &quot;Myocardial Infarction+&quot;) AND (MH &quot;Hypertension+&quot;) AND (TI(&quot;mm Hg&quot; OR mmHg OR &quot;millimeter of mercury&quot;) OR AB(&quot;mm Hg&quot; OR mmHg OR &quot;millimeter of mercury&quot;)) AND (PY 2004-2014) AND (LA English) = 16 Results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apply Limits as Necessary

- Should You Limit the Search at All?
- That depends on whether you truly need to or not.
- Most likely you will want to limit your search to a specific date range.
- If you cannot devote time or resources to translating articles, you may have to limit to the language(s) you know. Otherwise, you may wish to search for articles in all languages in order to understand what researchers worldwide are reporting about your topic.
- See the Narrow Search Handout for examples of language and date limits.