Introductory and Narrow Search Tips

Contents
Use Controlled Vocabulary ........................................................................................................2
Use AND ................................................................................................................................3
Use Phrases or Keywords in the Title or Abstract .................................................................4
Limit the Date of Publication ...............................................................................................6
Limit the Language of Publication ......................................................................................8
Limit the Number of Databases You Search / Closing Suggestions ................................11
Search Replay .....................................................................................................................12
Use Controlled Vocabulary

- **Controlled vocabulary** is a set of terms used to index articles in a database. Using controlled vocabulary to search means that you will only retrieve articles that are indexed with the chosen controlled vocabulary terms. There are some databases that do not use controlled vocabulary.
- **Find controlled vocabulary** terms by searching available controlled vocabulary indexes/thesauri.

**Examples of Controlled Vocabulary Thesauri/Indexes:**

- **PubMed - MeSH database**: In PubMed, controlled vocabulary is called MeSH (Medical Subject Headings).
  
  ![PubMed screenshot](image1)
  
  **1.** Search MeSH
  
  **2.** Select MeSH

- **ProQuest platform - Thesaurus**: For databases on the ProQuest platform, controlled vocabulary is found in the relevant thesaurus.
  
  ![ProQuest screenshot](image2)
  
  **1.** Select “Thesaurus”
  
  **2.** Choose appropriate thesaurus from list (dependent on database)
  
  **3.** Search.

- **CINAHL - CINAHL Headings**: In CINAHL, controlled vocabulary is called CINAHL Headings.
  
  ![CINAHL screenshot](image3)
  
  **1.** Select CINAHL Headings
  
  **2.** Search CINAHL Headings


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Use AND

- Still retrieving too many results? In most cases you can add other components to your search with AND.
- For example, if I wanted to learn about heart attacks related to high blood pressure, I could combine the controlled vocabulary terms for heart attack and high blood pressure with AND.

- Examples of where to combine terms with AND:
  
  o PubMed - use “Advanced Search” to combine previous searches with AND:

  o ProQuest Platform - Use “Recent Searches” to combine previous searches with AND:

  o CINAHL - Use “Search History” to combine previous searches with AND:

EXAMPLE IN PUBMED:
controlled vocabulary search combined using AND: "Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] AND "Hypertension"[Mesh] = 5,168 results
Use Phrases or Keywords in the Title or Abstract

- If there is not a controlled vocabulary term for your topic, you may want to add it as a keyword or keyword phrase in the title or abstract to your search.
  - Use quotes around phrases to indicate that words are to be searched together, as a phrase.
  - Combine groups of similar keywords with OR to indicate that you want results that include one OR another of these similar words.
  - Group your similar keywords in parenthesis to separate them from other terms.
- Limiting keywords to their appearance in the title or abstract will ensure that those keywords are prominent in the article.
- Examples of where to limit terms to title or abstract:
  - **PubMed** – First go into “Advanced Search,” then choose **Title/Abstract** from the drop-down menu to the left of the search bar
  
  ![PubMed Advanced Search](image)

  - **ProQuest platform** – Go into Advanced Search and choose **Title** or **Abstract** from the drop-down menu to the right of the search bar
  
  ![ProQuest Advanced Search](image)
- CINAHL – choose **Title** or **Abstract** from the drop-down menu to the right of the search bar.

EXAMPLE IN PUBMED:
search using controlled vocabulary, AND, and phrases/keywords in the title and abstract:

"Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] AND "Hypertension"[Mesh] AND ("mm Hg"[Title/Abstract] OR mmHg[Title/Abstract] OR "millimeter of mercury"[Title/Abstract])

= 309 results
Limit the Date of Publication

- Another option for narrowing your search results would be to **limit the date of publication**.

- Examples of where to limit to a certain date of publication:
  - **PubMed** – via the Publication Dates option in the column to the left of your search.
  
  ![Publication dates
  5 years
  10 years
  Custom range…](image)

  - **ProQuest Platform** – via Publication Date graph in the column to the right of your search.

  ![Publication date
  1987 - 2013 (years)](image)

  ![Update](image)

  Enter a specific date range
- CINAHL - via the Limit to Publication Dates option in the column to the left of your search.

EXAMPLE IN PUBMED:

search using controlled vocabulary, AND, phrases/keywords in the title and abstract, and publication date limits:
"Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] AND "Hypertension"[Mesh] AND ("mm Hg"[tiab] OR mmHg[tiab] OR "millimeter of mercury"[tiab]) AND ("2004/02/15"[PDat] : "2014/02/11"[PDat]) = 99 results
Limit the Language of Publication

- Yet another way to narrow your search would be to limit the language of publications retrieved.

- **Examples of where to limit language:**
  
  - **PubMed**
    1. Select “Show additional filters” from the column to the left of your search results.
    2. Select “Languages” from the set of “Additional filters” that appear.
    3. Select “Show”.
    4. Select “English” or “More” depending on which language you would like to limit to.

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ProQuest Platform

1. If you have already searched, choose “Modify Search”

2. Choose “Advanced Search”

3. Scroll down and choose desired language
CINAHL

1. Choose “Advanced Search.”

EXAMPLE IN PUBMED:

search using controlled vocabulary, AND, phrases/keywords in the title and abstract, publication date limits, and language limits:

Limit the Number of Databases You Search / Closing Suggestions

We've reduced 193,554 results down to 90!

If we perform this search in multiple databases we will probably come across duplicate results as well as new results. If you are only looking for a few relevant articles searching in multiple databases may not be necessary.

If you are not finding the right articles from one database you need consider:

- Are you searching in the right type of database?
  - Don’t search in a medical database for business materials, etc.
  - If you’re looking for medical materials, PubMed (Medline) is a great place to start.
  - To see suggested databases for various disciplines, see the Databases page of our Osteopathic Medicine LibGuide: [http://library.lmunet.edu/osteopathic_medicine](http://library.lmunet.edu/osteopathic_medicine)

- Are you searching with the right terms?
  - You may have chosen MeSH terms that are too broad when there was a more narrow term available. Don’t choose "Vascular Diseases" [Mesh] if you’re really looking for "Hypertension" [Mesh].
  - If you’re still getting too many results you may consider making your question more specific so that you may AND in more terms.

- If there is very little information on your topic you may want to consider broadening your search.
  - Perhaps your topic is too specific, or there has been very little research done on your topic. If so, see information for broadening a search in the Medium Search handout.

If you encounter any problems or have any questions while searching feel free to contact your relevant subject librarian.

Searches in this handout were performed in PubMed on 2/11/14.
Search Replay

"Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] = 143,114 results

"Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] AND "Hypertension"[Mesh] = 5,168 results

"Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] AND "Hypertension"[Mesh] AND ("mm Hg"[Title/Abstract] OR mmHg[Title/Abstract] OR "millimeter of mercury"[Title/Abstract]) = 309 results

"Myocardial Infarction"[Mesh] AND "Hypertension"[Mesh] AND ("mm Hg"[tiab] OR mmHg[tiab] OR "millimeter of mercury"[tiab]) AND ("2004/02/15"[PDat] : "2014/02/11"[PDat]) = 99 results