

# Tips and tricks for database searching

## Formulating a question

What are the subject areas? How do authors writing about this subject describe it? Are there alternative words you need to use?

Use PICO to help you break down your search into separate concepts:

- Patient group/condition
- Intervention
- Comparison
- Outcome

## Searching

**Keyword searching** - for words in the title or abstract.

AND	Use AND when you want both concepts in your search results e.g. methadone <b>AND</b> pain
OR	Use OR when you want either concept included in your results e.g. when they are different ways of describing the same thing: multidisciplinary <b>OR</b> mdt <b>OR</b> interdisciplinary
Phrase	Use double quotes for searching for specific phrases e.g. "diabetic foot", but be aware this won't pick up articles where the words are in a different order.
Adjacency	To specify how near words should be to each other, use adj plus a number. You can choose a number up to 9 (i.e. within 9 words of each other in either direction) e.g. chronic adj2 pain
Truncating	Use * to search different endings e.g. educat* will search educate, education, educational.
Alternative spelling	For alternate spellings of words use the wildcard ? e.g. p?ediatrics will pick up both US and UK spelling.
Authors	Authors can be listed in journals with one or more of their initials; to ensure all relevant articles are found use quotes and truncation. E.g. "smith j*" and select the author field from the drop down menu

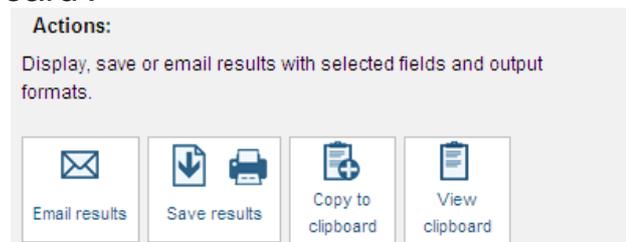
**Subject heading searching** - to avoid having to think of synonyms or alternative endings or spellings consider using the subject headings.

Enter the subject term and tick the '**Map to Thesaurus**' box. Select the subject heading that matches your search term, select '**Explode**' and then click search, this includes more specific related subject headings.

Use the scope notes on the thesaurus option to find any limits (date) on the use of terms or to suggest alternative ways of describing the subject.

## Clipboard

Select citations you wish to save and '**copy to clipboard**' (scroll down for the clipboard below the search results). If you wish to continue searching then you may add further results as you go along. To view saved results click on 'view clipboard'.



You can also save and email results using these buttons.

## Saving searches and getting alerts

To save a search either select the rows you wish to save or click 'save all rows'. You will be prompted to name your search and also specify if you wish it to run as a regular alert. This means you will get a weekly or monthly email with new articles published and added to the database.

## Useful Resources

- UptoDate – via Staffroom or [www.uptodate.com/](http://www.uptodate.com/) (Athens password)
- NICE Evidence Search - [www.evidence.nhs.uk/](http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/) (no password required)
- TRIP Database - [www.tripdatabase.com/](http://www.tripdatabase.com/) (no password required)
- Cochrane Library - [www.thecochranelibrary.com/](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/) (no password required)
- Map of Medicine - [www.mapofmedicine.com/](http://www.mapofmedicine.com/) (Athens password)
- NICE Pathways - <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/> (no password)
- BMJ Best Practice - [bestpractice.bmj.com/](http://bestpractice.bmj.com/) (Athens password)

For help with finding information or selecting the right resources talk to your Clinical Librarians:

- York Margaret Scarce ext 772 6718
- Scarborough Jan Godwin ext 771 6242