Search operators in databases

Search operators for free-text searching

Database	Double quotes for phrase searching	Truncation	Boolean operators	Brackets	Automatic stemming	Proximity searching
BMJ Best Practice	Yes	No	No	No	No, but will search for some synonyms	No
BMJ Case Reports	Yes	No	AND, OR - not case sensitive	No	No	No
Cochrane Library	Yes	Yes - symbol is *	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	Yes	Yes	NEAR (within 6 words) NEAR/X within X words NEXT next to each other in order specified

Search operators in databases

Database	Double quotes for phrase searching	Truncation	Boolean operators	Brackets	Automatic stemming	Proximity searching
EBSCOHost	Yes	Yes - symbol is *	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	Yes	No	N for near within X words in any order e.g. N5 W for near within X words in the same order e.g. W4
ERIC	Yes	Yes - symbol is *	AND, OR - not case sensitive Use minus (-) to exclude terms, and plus (+) to indicate required terms	Yes	No	No
Google Scholar	Yes	No	AND, OR - case-sensitive, must be in upper case Use minus (-) to exclude terms	Yes	No	No

Updated 17 March 2022

Search operators in databases

NHS Berkshire Healthcare Library and Knowledge Service

Database	Double quotes for phrase searching	Truncation	Boolean operators	Brackets	Automatic stemming	Proximity searching
Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines	Yes	Yes - Use ? in a search for a single character (e.g. wom?n) Use an asterisk (*) to represent zero or more characters. Cannot be used at start of search term or with phrase searches.	AND, OR, NOT – case sensitive, must be upper case	Yes	Yes	No
medRxiv	Yes, but not in combination with Boolean operators	Yes - symbol is *	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	No	Yes	No
NHS Knowledge and Library Hub	Yes	Yes - symbol is *	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	Yes	No	N for near within X words in any order e.g. N5 W for near within X words in the same order e.g. W4

Search operators in databases

Database	Double quotes for phrase searching	Truncation	Boolean operators	Brackets	Automatic stemming	Proximity searching
Ovid	Yes	Yes - symbol is * Limit to n characters e.g. child*4 Can use # for single character (e.g. wom#n), or ? for zero or one character (e.g. p?ediatric)	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	Yes	No	ADJx e.g. nursing ADJ3 education
ProQuest	Yes	Yes - symbol is * By default, limited to 5 characters Use *n to limit to specific number of character ? for single character	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	Yes	Yes - searches for US and UK spellings and plurals	NEAR/n e.g. nursing NEAR/3 education Defaults to within 4 words without qualifier Use PRE for words in same order
Royal Marsden Manual	Yes	Yes - symbol is *	AND, OR - not case sensitive	Yes	No	No

Search operators in databases

Database	Double quotes for phrase searching	Truncation	Boolean operators	Brackets	Automatic stemming	Proximity searching
TRIP database	Yes, but remove hyphens from phrase e.g. "e learning"	Sort of - symbol is *, but does seem to give some odd results	AND, OR, NOT - not case sensitive	Yes	Yes. Also searches for synonyms	Doesn't work
UpToDate	Yes	Yes - symbol is *			Automatic synonym search	

Field searching

Database	Field searching
BMJ Case Reports	Yes, see advanced search page for options
Cochrane Library	Yes, use dropdown next to search box
EBSCOHost	Yes, use dropdown next to search box (which also gives field codes). Alternatively, to use field codes in search statement, place before term in uppercase e.g. TI "artery rupture". To search multiple fields, it appears necessary to use multiple statements e.g. TI "artery rupture" OR AB "artery rupture"
ERIC	Yes, place field code and colon before search term e.g. title:"test score". No space between colon and search terms. Codes includes title:, author:, abstract:. See ERIC search help page for full list.

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Search operators in databases

Database	Field searching
Google Scholar	Can use allintitle: to search title only e.g. allintitle: vein rupture Can use author: to search author only e.g. author: "JP Curtis" Can use source: to search within a journal e.g. source:nature. When searching source, remove space after colon
medRxiv	Yes, see advanced search page for options
NHS Knowledge and Library Hub	Yes, use dropdown next to search box (which also gives field codes) on advanced search page. Alternatively, to use field codes in search statement, place before term in uppercase e.g. TI "artery rupture"
OVID	Yes, see 'Search Fields' for codes. To use field codes in search statement, place after term and a full-stop e.g. methotrexate.ti,ab to search title and abstract, or "physical therapy modalities".sh to search in subject headings. To search multiple fields, place a comma between field codes.
ProQuest	Yes, see Advanced Search page for dropdown (which also gives field codes). Alternatively, click 'Field Codes' on Advanced Search page for a full list for the database. Alternatively, to use field codes in search statement place before term without a space e.g. ti,ab(methotrexate) to search title and abstract, or mjmesh(physical therapy modalities) to search in major MeSH headings. To search multiple fields, place a comma between field codes.
TRIP database	Can search in title or document. See advanced search page for options

Thesaurus searching

Although a provider may offer thesaurus searching, not all databases in that provider will necessarily offer it, and some will not offer options such as explode, major concept, and subheadings.

Database	Accessing thesaurus	Direct entry for known terms
Cochrane Library	Yes, Cochrane uses MeSH and this can be accessed from Advanced Search > Medical Terms (MeSH)	
EbscoHost	Yes, select 'Suggest Subject Terms' on Advanced Search screen	Exploded, major concept: MM "Emergency Medical Services+" Exploded, not major concept: MH "Emergency Medical Services+" Not exploded, not major concept: MH "Emergency Medical Services" To add a subheading, place the two-letter code(s) at the end separated by a slash: (MH "Methotrexate/PO/AE")
ERIC	Yes, click 'Thesaurus' tab on main search screen	descriptor:"Stuttering" ERIC does not offer explode, major concept or subheadings in its thesaurus

Search operators in databases

Database	Accessing thesaurus	Direct entry for known terms
NHS Knowledge and Library Hub	No, due to the multi-database search. It is possible to do a field search within subject headings, but terms will differ between databases	
OVID	Yes, tick 'Map Term to Subject Heading' on Advanced Search screen	Exploded, major concept: exp *Emergency Medical Services/ Exploded, not major concept: exp Emergency Medical Services/ Not exploded, not major concept: Emergency Medical Services/ To add a subheading, place the two-letter code(s) at the end separated by a comma: Methotrexate/ae, po

Search operators in databases

Database	Accessing thesaurus	Direct entry for known terms
ProQuest	Yes, select 'Thesaurus' on Advanced Search screen	Exploded, major concept: MJMESH.EXACT.EXPLODE("Emergency Medical Services") Exploded, not major concept: MESH.EXACT.EXPLODE("Emergency Medical Services") Not exploded, not major concept: MESH.EXACT("Emergency Medical Services") For databases other than Medline, substitute MESH for MAINSUBJECT: MJMAINSUBJECT.EXACT.EXPLODE("Emergency Medicine") It is possible to enter subheadings directly, but it is not recommended – use the Thesaurus system