Search Results

Finding a reasonable and appropriate number of citations can be a matter of trial and error. In general, it's best to start with a broad approach then narrow your results in subsequent steps.

When you get too much…
Techniques for **narrowing** your search results include:
- Using Limits
- Using subheadings with MeSH terms
- Focusing your MeSH term
- Combining search terms with the Boolean **AND**

If you get too little…
Techniques for **broadening** your search results include:
- Checking the MeSH Tree Structures for a broader term to search
- Exploding your MeSH term
- Combining search terms with the Boolean **OR**

Beyond Databases

Not all topics can be well researched using traditional library tools.

- If a topic is very local in nature (e.g., a community needs assessment) or extremely current, personal contacts may be the best approach.

- Consult appropriate professional organizations, groups and societies. Many of these also maintain useful websites.

We can help…

Contact Scott Memorial Library
- Visit the Service Desk (2nd Floor SML)

- Email: *Askalibrarian@jefferson.edu*

- Call, or request a personal consultation: 215-503-6994

Access our collection of Database Guides and Quickviews at:
http://library.jefferson.edu/Ask/Help/

http://library.jefferson.edu

Scott Memorial Library
Thomas Jefferson University
1020 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Lit Searching Tips rev. August 2014

Literature Searching: Tips and Tricks

Advice for starting and developing a successful search strategy

General Tips for Getting Started...

Understand and refine your topic:
- Do some preliminary reading to help focus your topic.
- Consult with a colleague.
- Use specialized dictionaries and thesauri to clarify terminology and identify synonyms.

Choose an appropriate database:
Understand the scope (subject, date, geographic coverage) of a database before beginning your search.

Scope notes can be found in **Databases A-Z** at:
http://library.jefferson.edu/Collections/Databases/dbaselist.cfm

Use the database's built-in help menus and tutorials.
These can help you learn about and take advantage of database features.

Become familiar with any controlled vocabulary used in indexing your database.
Using a controlled vocabulary can increase the precision of your search results.

Use a single relevant article to begin (or expand) your research by:
- Searching the author's name to find related articles
- Perusing the bibliography for related articles
- Looking for other articles on your topic published in the same journal (i.e., use the journal title as a search limit)

MeSH Tips

MeSH (**Me**dical **S**ubject **H**eadings) is the controlled vocabulary used the in MEDLINE, the premier database for locating biomedical journal literature. Using MeSH helps you to create an efficient search strategy by bringing together analogous concepts and allowing you to take advantage of hierarchical relationships among search terms.

- Use the MeSH hierarchy (**Tree Structures**) to make sure that you're using the most specific subject heading available for your concept.

- Search the **Permuted Index** (available under the Ovid Tools menu) to help locate appropriate subject headings. (Search this using single words only.)

- Use MeSH **subheadings** to limit your search to a specific aspect of the main concept (e.g., therapy, adverse effects)

Using Limits

Make use of available limits to refine your search. While each database may offer unique limits, many of them allow you to limit your search by:

- Publication Date
- Language
- Publication Type (e.g., Review Articles, Practice Guidelines)

You'll have more control over the results if you build your search strategy by applying one limit at a time.

OVID Tip

Click on **Complete Reference** to view the subject headings assigned to an article, then click on a relevant subject heading to hyperlink to other references indexed with that subject heading.

For more information…
See more Ovid Tips at:
http://library.jefferson.edu/Ask/Help/ovid-tips.html

PubMed Tip

Use the **Related Articles** link feature in PubMed. PubMed creates this set by comparing words from the title, abstract, and MeSH terms using a powerful word-weighted algorithm. Citations are displayed in rank order from most to least relevant, with the "linked from" citation displayed first. Only PubMed offers this feature.

For more information…
See more PubMed Tips at:
http://library.jefferson.edu/Ask/Help/pubmed-tips.html