

Database search interfaces comparison table

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Note: database search interfaces change relatively frequently. Check help files if search doesn't perform as you expect.

	Ovid	Ebsco	Proquest	Web of Science	Google Scholar	Pubmed	Epistemonikos	DoPHER/TroPHI	Cochrane Library
Truncation	<p>*</p> <p>Adding a number after the * restricts the number of letters that can follow it, e.g. clinic*1 finds clinic and clinics but not clinical.</p>	<p>*</p> <p>Note: cannot combine truncation & wildcard symbols, e.g. p#ediatric* is not valid.</p> <p>Can use * in the middle of a phrase to stand in for any word, e.g. midsummer * dream = any phrases that have these two words with one more word between them.</p>	<p>*</p> <p>Note: can include the * inside "" if truncating a phrase, e.g. "preschool child*"</p> <p>Adding square brackets and a number after the * restricts the number of letters that can follow it, e.g. clinic[*1] finds clinic and clinics but not clinical.</p>	<p>*</p> <p>Note: need to combine phrase terms with NEAR/O and use parenthesis if using truncation, e.g. (preschool NEAR/O child*)</p> <p>WoS also allows left hand truncation, e.g. *oxide = peroxide, monoxide, hydroxide etc.</p>	<p>Not supported (Google truncates automatically. Use "" around individual words or phrases to stop this.)</p>	*	*	<p>*</p> <p>Enclose truncated word or phrase in "", e.g. "nurs*" or "preschool child*"</p>	<p>*</p> <p>Truncation can be used before, in the middle or at the end of a word as long as there are at least 3 characters.</p>

			If no number is specified, * replaces up to 5 characters. Use (for e.g.) [*10] to replace more than this.						
Automatic stemming	None	Plural and possessive versions of terms may be searched. (e.g. doctor will return doctor, doctors, doctor's) To avoid this use "" Additionally, UK & US spelling variants may be included automatically.	None	Applies both stemming and lemmitization to remove endings & automatically find variants. Use "" around words to stop this. Stemming/lemmitization turned off when using wildcards/truncation symbols.	Yes	None	None	No, but see help page for "Inflectional Search" to include alternative forms of words.	Automatically searches for other variants of common words

Wildcards	<p>? Substitutes 0 or 1 character (e.g. color / colour)</p> <p># Substitutes 1 character only (e.g. entoblast / endoblast)</p>	<p># Substitutes 0 or 1 character (e.g. color / colour)</p> <p>? Substitutes 1 character only (e.g. entoblast / endoblast)</p> <p>Use of # wildcard turns off automatic stemming.</p>	<p>? Substitutes 0 or 1 character (e.g. color / colour)</p> <p>No option to substitute 1 character only but ? can be placed at the end of a search term to truncate to 1 character, e.g. clinic? = clinic, clinics but not clinical.</p>	<p>\$ Substitutes 0 or 1 character (e.g. color / colour)</p> <p>? Substitutes 1 character only (e.g. entoblast / endoblast)</p>	<p>Not supported. Google will search automatically for alternative spellings. Use "" around words to stop it doing this.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Not supported.</p>	<p>Not supported (but see Inflectional Search as above)</p>	<p>? Substitutes 0 or 1 character at the beginning, middle or end of a word as long as there are at least 3 characters.</p>
Proximity	<p>ADJ = two terms next to each other in the specified order.</p> <p>ADJ1 = two terms next to each</p>	<p>N3 = two terms within 3 words of each other in any order.</p> <p>W3 = two terms within 3 words of each other in</p>	<p>NEAR/n or N/n = within n words in any order.</p> <p>NEAR with no following number defaults to within 4 words.</p>	<p>NEAR/n (note: NEAR on its own looks for terms within 15 words of each other. Use NEAR/0 to search for terms next</p>	<p>AROUND(n) = within n words in the specific order.</p> <p>?Some guides suggest that the search string has to be enclosed in inverted</p>	<p>Not supported.</p>	<p>Not supported.</p>	<p>NEAR Not clear how "near" is defined in terms of proximity. Numbers after NEAR not supported.</p>	<p>NEAR/n = within n words in any order (note: NEAR on its own looks for terms within 6 words of each other).</p>

	<p>other in any order.</p> <p>ADJ3 finds terms in any order with to 2 words or fewer between them.</p> <p>FREQ allows you to specify that a term must appear with a particular level of frequency in a field to be retrieved (see comment below for details of use ¹.)</p>	<p>the specific order.</p> <p>Must have a number specified. N1 = next to each other (in any order) or W1 (in specified order).</p>	<p>If using N on its own you must specify a number, e.g. N/3 but not N.</p> <p>PRE/n or P/n = first search term within n words before the second terms.</p>	<p>to one another).</p>	<p>commas, e.g. “smoking AROUND(5) advertising”</p> <p>Not clear how well AROUND actually works in practice – probably best to assume that proximity is not really supported.</p>			<p>To use proximity operator, search terms should be enclosed in inverted commas, e.g. “child” NEAR “health”</p>	<p>NEXT = words next to each other in the stated order.</p>
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<p>Phrase search</p>	<p>No "" required unless phrase contains a command term (e.g. and, or, use) e.g. "reducing use"</p>	<p>No "" required. Stop words (e.g. a, the, for, of) are always ignored, even if "" are used. "sink or swim" would also return "sink and swim" or any other phrase with the words sink & swim separated by one word.</p>	<p>Enclose phrases in inverted commas.</p>	<p>Enclose phrases in inverted commas.</p> <p>Phrases separated by a hyphen without "" are searched as a single term with or without hyphen (e.g. waste-water also retrieves waste water).</p>	<p>Enclose phrases in inverted commas.</p>	<p>Pubmed will automatically combine 2 terms with AND unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enclose in inverted commas - separate with a hyphen - use truncation symbol - specify search field <p>All of the above will make Pubmed search as a phrase.</p>	<p>Enclose phrases in inverted commas.</p>	<p>Enclose phrases in inverted commas.</p>	<p>Enclose phrases in inverted commas.</p> <p>Truncation can't be combined with phrase searching, instead use NEXT, e.g. child* NEXT health</p>
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Boolean	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT	AND / OR / NOT
					<p>Don't type AND. It is used between search terms by default.</p> <p>Alternatively use for OR.</p> <p>Use - for NOT (e.g. smoking -tobacco) The word NOT will not work.</p> <p>Use parenthesis or Advanced Search screen to build search strategy.</p>				
Parenthesis	Permitted.	Permitted.	Permitted.	Permitted.	Permitted.	Permitted.	Permitted.	Permitted. Search terms should be enclosed in "", e.g. ("vaccine*") OR	Permitted.

								"immuniz*") AND "child"	
Subject search	Controlled vocabulary depending on the database (e.g. MeSH for Medline, Emtree for Embase)	Controlled vocabulary depending on the database	Databases do have controlled vocabularies. These are of variable breadth and quality.	Topic search is not using controlled vocabulary, instead it retrieves results from title, abstract & keyword fields and also "Keyword Plus" which is an algorithm that includes common terms from references.	None.	Will automatically try to map search terms to MeSH as well as searching for them as keywords. Can use Advanced Search to search MeSH terms only or conduct more precise search.	None.	None.	Can access MeSH browser and include MeSH terms.
Search field selection	List of permitted search fields under Search Fields tab.	Advanced search gives drop down lists of permitted fields.	Advanced search gives drop down lists of permitted field.	Basic search gives drop down lists of some permitted fields (not abstract	Used Advanced search for option to limit search to article titles, otherwise	Advanced search gives drop down lists of permitted fields.	Advanced search gives drop down lists of permitted fields (only	Only field choice is title only search. Default search appears to	Advanced search gives drop down lists of permitted fields.

	<p>Click on field name for description .</p> <p>Short codes can be used by adding a dot before the code, e.g. child.ti</p> <p>Separate multiple fields with commas, e.g. child.ti,ab</p> <p>Use parenthesis to group search terms before adding field codes, e.g. (child or infant).ti,ab</p>	<p>Can use short codes before the search term, e.g. TI child.</p> <p>Multiple fields must be combined with OR, e.g. TI child OR AB child</p> <p>Use parenthesis to group search terms if applying the same field code to all of them, e.g. TI (child OR infant)</p>	<p>Can use short codes before the search term enclosed in parenthesis, e.g. ti(child)</p> <p>Multiple fields must be combined with OR, e.g. ti(child) OR ab(child)</p> <p>Use parenthesis to group search terms if applying the same field code to all of them, e.g. ti(child OR infant)</p>	<p>although it is possible to search in abstract field using short code)</p> <p>Can use short codes before the search term separated by =, e.g. TI=child</p> <p>List of short codes on Advanced Search page (doesn't list abstract but short code is AB)</p> <p>Multiple fields must be combined with OR, e.g. TS=child OR AB=child</p> <p>Use parenthesis</p>	<p>field specific searching is not available.</p> <p>Advanced search also allows limiting by specific author and journal title.</p>	<p>Can use short codes after the search term in square brackets, e.g. child[TI]</p> <p>Can't search abstract alone, but you can search title/abstract together [TIAB]</p> <p>Multiple fields must be combined with OR, e.g. child[TI] OR child[MH]</p>	<p>title, abstract or both).</p> <p>Can use field name followed by : before search term in brackets, e.g. title:(child)</p> <p>Multiple fields must be combined with OR, e.g. title:(child) OR abstract:(child)</p> <p>Use parenthesis to group search terms if applying the same field code to all of them, e.g. title:(child OR infant)</p>	<p>be title/abstract .</p>	<p>Short codes can be used in the Search Manager by adding a : before the code, e.g. child:ti</p> <p>Separate multiple fields with commas, e.g. child:ti,ab</p> <p>Use parenthesis to group search terms before adding field codes, e.g. (child or infant):ti,ab</p>
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				to group search terms if applying the same field code to all of them, e.g. TI=(child OR infant)		Can't use parentheses to group search terms if applying the same field code to all of them. Enter separately.			
Help files	http://site.ovid.com/site/help/documentation/osp/en/index.htm#CSHID=title dis.htm StartTopic=Content/title dis.htm SkinName=OvidSP_Web_Help_Skin	http://support.ebsco.com/knowledge.idm.oclc.org/help/index.php?	https://search.proquest.com/help/academic/webframe.html?Search_Tips.html	https://images.webofknowledge.com/images/help/WOS/index.html	https://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/help.html https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/2466433?vid=1-635809345577999405-2198580377	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK3830/	https://www.evistemonikos.org/en/about-us/how-to-use#advanced-search	https://epi.ioe.ac.uk/webdatabases4/SearchHelp.aspx	https://www.cochranelibrary.com/advanced-search/ > "Search Help" button

¹ from Ovid help file: "You must qualify your term to a field, then apply the frequency you want, as in: <term>.xy./freq=n. In this syntax, xy is the two-letter field code and n represents the minimum number of times that you want your term to appear in records retrieved. Do not use spaces in this search statement. For example, the search blood pressure.tx./freq=10 retrieves only records in which the phrase blood pressure appears ten or more times in the Full Text (TX) field of the database."