Medline Advanced Search Tips

There are many techniques to help refine your search – ask a Librarian for help!

1. Search for one concept at a time before combining them

- Makes it easier to modify and refine your searches.

2. Use subject headings eg, MeSH

- Increases the focus and relevancy of your results.
- A consistent way to find all articles on a topic when authors use different words.
- Find a useful article, look at the subject headings, and use them in your search.
- Medline (Ovid) maps to MeSH headings. Select the MeSH database in PubMed.

3. Use your own keywords

- Increases the breadth /coverage of your search
- Finds articles not yet assigned subject headings.
- Use when there are no subject headings.

4. Use AND/OR appropriately

- AND – combines different concepts e.g. *rehabilitation AND outcome measures*
- OR – combines similar concepts/synonyms e.g. *measures OR tests*

5. Too few articles? Broaden your search

- Add more synonyms; combine with OR eg, *neurological OR neuropsychological*
- Truncate keywords eg, *measure* = measures, measurement, measurements*
- Use a broad (general) subject heading eg, ***Rehabilitation/***
- Include related subject headings in the Mesh tree. Tick the "Explode" box in Medline Ovid eg, **exp Rehabilitation/** will include specific terms found below this term eg, **Exercise Therapy/**. PubMed automatically explodes unless you select: " Do not include MeSH terms found below this term in the MeSH hierarchy".

6. Too many articles? Focus your search

- Add another concept; combine with AND eg, *rehabilitation* AND *measure** AND *outcome*
- Search for keywords in the article title field – good for finding a few relevant articles.
- Use a specific Subject Heading eg, ***Occupational Therapy/***
- Make the subject heading a major topic of the article eg, *****Occupational Therapy/*** In Medline (Ovid) tick "Focus". In PubMed tick "Restrict to MeSH Major Topic".
- Use sub-headings to be more specific eg, ***Stroke/rehabilitation***
- Use database limits eg, *Language, age, year, publication type (eg, review)*