

## Contact Details:

Tel: 020 7290 2941  
Fax: 020 7290 2939  
E-Mail: [litsearch@rsm.ac.uk](mailto:litsearch@rsm.ac.uk)

## RSM Library ProQuest Dialog Database Guides / 05

# Further Tips for Database Searching



*This helpsheet should be used in conjunction with the helpsheets for individual databases in the RSM Library's series of ProQuest Dialog Database Guides, available in the Library and on our website at: <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/library/e-resources.aspx>*

## Organising your Search Strategy

In undertaking a successful database search, it is advisable to firstly plan your search strategy. Formulate your search question by identifying the keywords and any appropriate synonyms and separate them into separate concepts to be combined within your search.

*For a comprehensive search, it is advisable to combine thesaurus (Medline or Embase) terms with textwords (i.e. those appearing in the title or abstract of a document).*

For example, see the plan below for a Medline search for references on the topic '**electroconvulsive therapy leading to memory loss**':

	AND	
	Concept 1	Concept 2
O R	Electroconvulsive - Therapy	Memory Disorders
	ECT	Memory Loss
	Electroshock Therapy	Amnesia
	Electric Shock Therapy	

Having identified the terms that you wish to search for and how they are to be combined (see the helpsheets in this series for individual databases for details of **linking search terms** and **combining sets**), you are ready to perform your search.

## Viewing a List of Similar Terms

As well as truncating the stem of search terms using \* (**asterisk**) (see the helpsheets in this series for individual databases for further details), it is often useful to view a list of similar terms, for example, to check author or journal names, or to see what words are used to describe a disease.

ProQuest Dialog provides **Look up** links to search and browse indexes for some search fields when you select a field from the drop-down menu to the right of the search box. When you click on a **Look up** link, a pop-up window displays.

To verify a journal name, for example, select **Publication title** from the drop-down menu and click on the **Look up Publications** link. Type as many words of the journal title as you are sure of in the pop-up window and click **Find**. ProQuest Dialog will show you a list of journal titles in the database that contain your search terms. Select the title(s) you want by clicking the appropriate checkboxes and finally, click on **Add to search** :

Look up Publications Help ? ✕

Enter a name.  
journal bone joint surgery Find

Contains  Begins with

Combine terms with: OR Add to search

You've selected 2 Publications to add [ view | clear ] ◀ Previous Next 100 ▶

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publications	Count
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Journal of bone and joint surgery. American volume	17206
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Journal of bone and joint surgery. British volume	10726

## Punctuation

Strip out punctuation from any search terms.

Examples: **alzheimer[\*1]** not Alzheimer's

**"evidence based"** not evidence-based

## Numbers/Formulas/CAS Registry Nos

### Numbers

ProQuest Dialog understands that numbers do not refer to set numbers.

Example: interleukin 2 is searched as **"interleukin 2"**

### Formulas

Type formulas as a string.

Example: **H2O**

### Chemical Abstracts (CAS) Registry Numbers

Use the **Look up CAS Registry numbers** link by selecting **CAS Registry number** from the field drop-down menu:

### Advanced Search

Look Up Citation

Thesaurus | Field codes | Search tips

in  Look up CAS Registry numbers

## Limits

*In order to narrow your search to match your needs and to provide a manageable number of references, you will often need to use a limit option. Limit options available vary between databases (Medline is used here as an example).*

1. To view a list of limit options to choose from, click on the **Search options** tab.
2. Type the set number of the set of results you wish to limit in the search box.
3. Click on one or more of the checkboxes or select options from drop-down menus.
4. Click the **Preview result counts** button to apply the limits.

The checkboxes listed immediately below the search box represent the most common limits available in the databases (e.g. humans, animals, females, males, abstract included).

To limit results by Publication Date, select **Specific date range** from the **Publication date** drop-down menu. Boxes will then appear asking you to enter a **Start** and **End** date.

Never select a day or a month as part of the publication date. Best to specify years only.

## Advanced Search

Look Up Citation

s1 in All fields  
 AND in All fields  
 AND in All fields

[Add a row](#) | [Remove a row](#)

Search options (✔ limits applied) | 1 Recent searches

**Limit to:**  Abstract included  Humans  Animals  Females  Males  
 Reviews  Clinical trials

**Publication date:**   
 Search for a range of years, years and months, or specific dates

**Start**  
 Any Day | Any Month | 2013 (yyyy)

**End**  
 Any Day | Any Month | 2018 (yyyy)

For an example of the above limitations applied to a search on the drug treatment of acne vulgaris, see set S2 of the search strategy below.

Located towards the bottom of the Search Options search are further limit options you may want to consider. They are commonly used to refine a search by, for example, the original language of the articles, by specific age groups or by document type (e.g. randomised controlled trial, meta-analysis).

**Language:**

Select all  
 Danish  
 Dutch  
 English  
 Esperanto  
 Estonian  
 Finnish  
 French  
 Georgian

**Age group:**

Select all  
 Infants, all (0-23 months)  
 Children, all (0-18 years)  
 Adults, all (19 years +)  


---

 Newborn (0-1 month)  
 Infant (1-23 months)  
 Preschool child (2-5 years)

See set S2 of the search strategy below for an example.

Set	Search	Databases	Results
S2	s1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Limits applied Databases: MEDLINE® Limited by: Humans Date: From 2013 to 2018 Language: English, French Age group: Children, all (0-18 years)	MEDLINE®	293*
S1	(MESH.EXACT("Acne Vulgaris -- drug therapy")) Databases: MEDLINE®	MEDLINE®	5117*

### Search options (✔ limits applied)

- It is important to note that the limits you selected will remain until you logoff the system. Return to the Search Options screen and click on the Clear form link to remove any limits applied to previous searches.

### CAUTION when using Limits in textword searching:

Limits such as **Humans/Animals, Females/Males, Document Type** (e.g. Reviews, Clinical trials) and **Age Group** are thesaurus terms (i.e. they appear in the 'MeSH/Subject' field of records). Applying these limits to textword searches will automatically eliminate unindexed references which are often the most recently published articles. However, the **Publication date** and **Language** limits can be applied to both textword and thesaurus searches.

## Multi-Database Searching

You may wish to carry out a search in more than one database. Each database will have different thesaurus and limit options to choose from. You are more likely to want to continue your search in other databases using **unique search strategies** tailored to each database.

- After completing your search in one database, click on the **Searching: 1 database** link on the top blue toolbar to display the list of databases provided by the RSM.
- Firstly, deselect the checkbox for the database already used. Click the checkbox beside the next database you wish to search (**see below for selecting Embase as an example**) and then click on the **Use selected databases** button, to return to the **Advanced Search** page. Your previous sets still show in the **Recent Searches** screen, but you will see the name of the new database in the information line at the top of the page, confirming that you are in the new database. Previous sets from other databases are available for display or duplicate removal.

Searching: 1 database | 1 Recent searches

< All databases | Current selections | All databases | Go to database details > View

Select all

Allied & Complementary Medicine™ (1985 - current)

DH-DATA: Health Administration, Medical Toxicology & Environmental Health (1983 - current)

Embase® (1947 - current)

MEDLINE® (1946 - current)

## Removing Duplicates

Having undertaken a search in more than one database, you may want to bring the sets together and remove duplicate records.

- In the search box, type the set numbers – one from each database – for duplicate removal using the Boolean **OR** operator between them (**see set S3 in the example search strategy below**). ProQuest Dialog removes duplicate references from your results list by default and works best if the total number of results does not exceed 5,000.
- When you click on the **number of results** link of the combined set of unique references (e.g. **set S3**), a pop-up window displays. Click on the **Use original databases** link to view these references.

Set	Search	Databases	Results
S3	s1 or s2 Databases: Embase® MEDLINE® <i>These databases are searched for part of your query.</i>	2 databases	837*
S2	EMB.EXACT("acne vulgaris -- drug therapy") AND EMB.EXACT("retinoic acid -- drug therapy") Databases: Embase®	Embase®	575*
S1	MESH.EXACT("Acne Vulgaris -- drug therapy") AND MESH.EXACT("Tretinoin -- therapeutic use") Databases: MEDLINE®	MEDLINE®	454*

## Timing Out

ProQuest Dialog databases automatically time out after 30 mins of inactivity and if that happens, you will lose your entire search. Clicking on checkboxes or links is not classed as activity. ProQuest Dialog recognises activity as clicking on a blue or orange button to send a command to the system. However, a 5 mins countdown in the form of a pop-up window displays, before the system times out.

**Please contact us if you require any further assistance using the databases or wish to book a tutorial. Contact details are provided in the banner of this helpsheet.**