Or

Leveling Off the Database Learning Curve

University of Florida
Health Science Center Libraries
Common database functions

- Help/Guide page
- Truncation/Wildcard
- Phrase searching
- Controlled vocabulary
- Limits
- Combining searches
- History of search session
- Links (to electronic full-text or the library’s record of its print journals)
- Saving search strategies & results
- Alerts: New results sent to your email
Don’t drown in a new database!
Look for a Help or User Guide button in the upper left or right corner or the top center of the screen.
Truncation

What it does
Searches for word variations:
therap* retrieves therapy, therapies, therapeutic, therapeutics

How to
1. Type the beginning of a search term--up to the point at which its forms/spellings differ (after the p in the therap* example above)
2. Add the database’s truncation symbol (usually *)
Databases may use different symbols for truncation.

See each database’s Help/Guide page to learn:
1. its truncation symbol
2. how many letters must precede a truncation symbol. In most databases you need 3 characters before you truncate (no *etiology for aetiology, for example.)

Over the past 2 decades, the asterisk has become nearly universal across bibliographic (library) databases as a truncation symbol. In the past, some databases used question marks and dollar signs also/instead.
Wildcards

- A WILDCARD symbol substitutes for one or sometimes no character(s) to retrieve similar words in one search. For example:

  - both *woman* and *women*
  - both *American orthopedics* and *British orthopaedics*

- Like truncation symbols, wildcard symbols vary between databases and usually cannot be used at the beginning of a search term.
Phrase Searching

• Many health ideas are expressed as phrases of two or more words.

• To ensure they’re only retrieved when adjacent without intervening words and in the order entered, place the multiword phrase in quotation marks:

  “health care”  “closed head injury”
Controlled vocabulary? What’s that?

A “lead” or standardized term chosen to gather related terms and word forms under.

Adolescent:
- Youth
- Teen
- Teenager
- Adolescence
- Post-elementary student
- Young adult....
Controlled Vocabulary—worth the effort?

You decide!

Computer matches individual letters

vs.

Human brains process whole-sentence or whole-article meaning
Why we ♡ controlled vocabulary!!!

- Collects alternate spellings/word forms and synonyms:
  
  *therapy*, *therapies*, *treatment*, *treatments*

- Separates meanings of homonyms:
  
  *hearing* (ear function) ≠ *hearing* (judicial function)

- Judges relative importance of term in the context of whole article (only “names” the most important concepts in articles)

- Notes negating terms like *but*, *except*, *not*
“Hidden” in full view

Most databases show you exactly where to find their controlled vocabulary. They just use different names for it:
These weed out unwanted results. Common limits:
- Language
- Publication date
- Type of publication
- Age of patient/client
Most databases allow you to combine searches of different “fields” in one search . . .

. . . or to combine previous searches with AND, OR, NOT
• Lists previous searches
• Enables you to combine previous searches.
• Lists terms and combinations you’ve tried in case you have to redo a search or pick up where you left off.
Connect to
- publishers’ full-text ejournals in databases
  OR
- full-text ejournals in the UF libraries’ catalog
Saving Search Strategies and Results; Setting up Alerts

• Most databases enable you to save your search strategies and their results either directly from the results page or from the Search History.

• You can also set up alerts: the database will email citations of new items that fit your search parameters when they enter the database.

PubMed (My NCBI section)

CINAHL (an Ebsco database)

ERIC (a ProQuest database)
Cast of Databases that Appeared in Examples

Databases

Quick picks – the most popular databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AccessMedicine</th>
<th>BIOSIS</th>
<th>CAB</th>
<th>CINAHL</th>
<th>Clinical Pharmacology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cochrane Library</td>
<td>EBSCOhost Web Databases</td>
<td>ERIC (ProQuest)</td>
<td>HaPI</td>
<td>InCites Journal Citation Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>NCBI</td>
<td>ProQuest Databases</td>
<td>PsycINFO</td>
<td>PubMed</td>
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<tr>
<td>SportDiscus</td>
<td>STAT!Ref e-books</td>
<td>TOXLINE</td>
<td>UpToDate (VPN access only)</td>
<td>Web of Science</td>
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