

Guide to literature searching

1. Define your topic

Before you embark on your search, you may want to consult relevant textbooks and dictionaries in order to better understand your topic, and find some related terms and synonyms for your search.

2. Plan your search

Before you search any databases, plan your search. You may find that you have several search topics you want to explore before you settle on a final one. For each topic, fill in a [Search Strategy Worksheet](#).

Additionally think about how you might want to limit your search. Limitations can include publication date range, language, type of publication, geographical area etc.

3. Search Relevant Databases for Journal Articles About Your Topic(s)

Once you have planned your search and have a list of phrases to search, you can begin looking for relevant materials.

Where are you going to search? The main place you search will be PubMed, but there are other sources of optometric research and writing. A list with links to the sources can be found here:

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/library-and-information-services/open-access-online-databases.html>

Common to many of the databases that you will search for materials, will be the use of Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) and truncation (* and ""). These allow you to combine search terms in specific ways for effective matches. It is a good idea to consult the search guidelines for each database to check for variations.

- To search for a phrase, use quotation marks. e.g. "diabetic screening"
- To search for various tenses/endings of a word, use a * at the end of the word e.g. diabet* will search for diabetes and diabetic.
- To join terms to narrow your search, use AND (capitalised) e.g. keratoconus AND surgery.
- To search for synonyms to expand your search, use OR (capitalised). Eg. "corneal transplant" OR keratoplasty.
- To exclude a word, use NOT (capitalised). e.g. "diabetic neuropathy" NOT foot
- To combine strategies, use brackets. e.g. (keratoconus AND treatment) NOT surgery.

To limit/filter your search results in PubMed, do the following:

- Click Limits, found underneath the search box.
- Select your limits. Recommended limits include: publication range, English language, and limiting the search field tags to Title/Abstract