

Searching Syntax Guide for Common Database Platforms

	OvidSP Medline, Embase, EBM Reviews	PubMed	Cochrane Library	EBSCO CINAHL, MEDLINE, SportDiscus	Proquest Dissertations & Theses, Physical Education Index	Web of Science Science Citation Index, Conference Proceedings	Scopus	Google Scholar
Boolean (and, or, not)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes ⁽¹⁾	Limited, in Advanced Search
Natural Language Searching	In Basic Search	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited	Limited	Yes
Relevancy Ranking	In Basic Search	No	Yes, by default	Yes, by default	Yes, by default	Yes	Yes	Yes, by default
Subject Headings	Mapped	Mapped or in MeSH database	Under "Medical Terms"	Mapped in some databases ⁽²⁾	Click on "Thesaurus"	Not mapped	Not mapped	N/A
Combine search sets e.g. #1 and (#2 or #3)	On main search page	Click on "Advanced Search"	Click on "Search Manager"	Click on "Search History"	Click on "Recent Searches"	Click on "Search History"	Under "Search History" on main page	N/A
Truncation e.g. <i>random*</i>	* or \$	*	*	*	*	*	*	N/A
Wildcard e.g. <i>randomi?ed</i>	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	N/A
Exact phrase searching e.g. <i>"randomized controlled trial"</i>	Automatically searches by phrase		Quotes required	Quotes Required	Quotes Required	Quotes Required	Quotes Required	Quotes required
Truncate in phrase e.g. <i>"random* controlled trial"</i>	N/A	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

Adjacency Searching	OvidSP	PubMed	Cochrane Library	EBSCO	Proquest	Web of Science	Scopus	Google Scholar
Within N words <i>randomized within N words before or after trial</i>	randomized adj3 trial	N/A	randomized NEAR/3 trial	randomized N3 trial	randomized NEAR/3 trial	randomized NEAR/3 trial	randomized W/3 trial	N/A
Within N words in exact order <i>randomized is within N words before trial</i>	N/A	N/A	randomized NEXT/3 trial	randomized W3 trial	randomized PRE/3 trial	N/A	randomized PRE/3 trial	N/A
In the same sentence	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	randomized SAME trial	N/A	N/A
Field Tag Searching⁽³⁾	OvidSP	PubMed	Cochrane Library	EBSCO	Proquest	Web of Science	Scopus	Google Scholar
In Title	migraine.ti.	migraine[ti]	migraine:ti	TI migraine	ti(migraine)	TI=migraine	TITLE(migraine)	In Advanced Search
In Abstract	migraine.ab.	migraine[ab]	migraine:ab	AB migraine	ab(migraine)	N/A	ABS(migraine)	N/A
In Title and Abstract	migraine.ti,ab.	migraine[tiab]	migraine:ti,ab	TI migraine or AB migraine	ti(migraine) or ab(migraine)	N/A	TITLE(migraine) or ABS(migraine)	N/A
As Keyword	migraine.mp.	No field tag needed	migraine:ti,ab,kw	No field tag needed	all(migraine)	TS=migraine	TITLE-ABS-KEY(migraine)	Full-text keyword search
By Subject Heading	migraine/ or migraine.sh.	migraine[Mesh]	Use "Medical Terms"	SU migraine ⁽⁴⁾	su(migraine)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Footnotes:

- 1) Scopus uses "AND NOT" instead of NOT
- 2) EBSCO databases without mapping will have a searchable list of subject headings under "Indexes" or "Thesaurus"
- 3) Field searching in most databases can be easily done by selecting the appropriate field from a drop-down menu. Instructions in italics are for advanced searching.
- 4) Subject field tag varies by database