Convert an Ovid Medline Search to a PubMed Search

Overview

It’s important that you search both Ovid Medline and PubMed when completing a systematic review. We recommend that you begin the search in Ovid. Once you have what you consider the optimal search, convert it to a PubMed search following these steps.

Note: You CANNOT CONVERT a PsycINFO search to a PubMed search following these steps.

Be sure you do the steps in the order listed!

Steps to convert your search

In Ovid:
1. Login and go to your saved searches.
2. Find the Medline search you want to convert.
3. Click the eye icon.
4. Highlight the search strategy and copy.

In Notepad:
1. Paste the search you copied into Notepad or a comparable text-based program.
   a. Don’t use MS Word.
2. Put a tab in between the line number and the first word of each search line.
   a. Have you put your Medline search into your Excel workbook? If not, do it once you have a tab after each line number. You need to record all of your results as soon as possible—don’t wait!
Change non-exploded MeSH terms using Ovid syntax to PubMed syntax

Non-exploded MeSH terms in Ovid Medline syntax have nothing in front of them and a “/” at the end of them. (Exploded MeSH terms start with exp and end with /.) Avoid using exploded terms but instead select terms one at a time.

Find occurrences of / by going to Edit—> Replace in the toolbar.

**Find what:** /

**Replace with:** [mesh:noexp]

Click Replace ALL.

This is what it should look like:

Change .ti,ab. or .ti,ab,kw. to [tiab]: Add after EVERY term

There isn’t a parallel search for .ti,ab,kw. In PubMed so you need to change those occurrences to just [tiab] in PubMed.

Unlike Ovid, PubMed syntax requires that you add [tiab] after every term that was searched in the title/abstract fields. Ovid allows you to use parentheses followed by .ti,ab. (see line 3 in the example).

Because you have to put [tiab] after every title/abstract term, it is a manual process.

Make it easy for yourself by typing it in (make sure it’s correct), then highlight, copy, and paste it after every term that needs it.

Double check what you just did by going to Edit—> Find in the toolbar. Search for all occurrences of .ti,ab. and .ti,ab,kw. and make sure each term that needs it has [tiab] after it. Once you are sure, delete .ti,ab,kw.
Replace lowercase **or** with UPPERCASE **OR**

Find occurrences of **or** by going to **Edit**→**Replace** in the toolbar.

Find what:  **or**  
Replace with:  **OR**

What is difficult to show is that you **MUST** put a space **BEFORE** **and** **AFTER** **or** **and** **OR**.

Otherwise, if you have a term with **or** in the middle of it (ex. **correct**), it will change those terms by capitalizing **or** to **cORrect**.

**Did you use “adj#” to show adjacency?**

Sorry—PubMed can’t do that. You will need to substitute with “and” for each occurrence.

Replace lowercase **and** with UPPERCASE **AND**

Find occurrences of **or** by going to **Edit**→**Replace** in the toolbar.

Find what:  **and**  
Replace with:  **AND**

Remember, you **MUST** put a space **BEFORE** **and** **AFTER** **and** **and** **AND**.

**Fix limit by language**

Manually change the last line from a limit statement to PubMed syntax. Use **[la]** to limit to a specific language.

20. 19 **AND** **english[la]**

**Did you limit by a range of years?**

Manually change it by using this syntax:

**Year1:year2[dp]** where **year1** refers to the beginning year in the range you want to cover and **year2** refers to the end of the range you want to cover. **[dp]** refers to date of publication.

21. 20 and **2000:2013[dp]**
Add a hash mark (#) in front of the line numbers in each search statement

PubMed requires that you use a hash mark (or number sign) in front of each line number in a search statement. This must be done manually.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVID</th>
<th>PUBMED</th>
<th>NOTES/TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 or 3</td>
<td>#1 OR #2 OR #3</td>
<td>Capitalize OR. Add a hash mark (#) in front of each number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 2 or 3</td>
<td>#1 AND #2 AND #3</td>
<td>Capitalize AND. Add a hash mark (#) in front of each number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exp term/</td>
<td>term[mesh]</td>
<td>It’s really better to avoid exploding terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.ti,ab.</td>
<td>[TIAB]</td>
<td>Add [TIAB] after every Title/Abstract term, especially if you have a series of terms inside of parentheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj number</td>
<td>AND</td>
<td>Pubmed does not do adjacency searching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and, or, not</td>
<td>AND, OR, NOT</td>
<td>Must CAPITALIZE in PubMed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit to English</td>
<td>AND English[la]</td>
<td>Remove the word “limit”, add [la] after the language you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit to a date range</td>
<td>Yr:yr[dp]</td>
<td>Put a colon between the range of years you want with [dp] following; don’t use spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVID study type Filters</td>
<td>PubMed study type filters</td>
<td>You can find the database filters on the school website: <a href="http://libguides.sph.uth.tmc.edu/pubmed_filters">http://libguides.sph.uth.tmc.edu/pubmed_filters</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Additional tips
* Use ‘Search and Replace’ whenever possible.
* Check your searches. Pay attention to the end of each search to make sure that the correct term is there (you may have to manually type in commands at the end of each line)

Searching in PUBMED
1. Copy each search statement
2. Paste search in search box
3. Click Search
4. Click the grey X to clear the contents of the search box.
5. Repeat steps 1-4 with next search line
6. Before combining lines, go to ‘Advanced and check your work to make sure that the line numbers in the search strategy match the PubMed line numbers. If not, adjust yours so they do.