PubMed
Brief Guide

Starting

Access to PubMed is available via the following URL:
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/

No password needed - the site is provided free by the National Library of Medicine (United States).

This is a brief guide – if you are going to use PubMed regularly the *Tutorial* (found on the left-hand menu bar) is highly recommended.

Description

PubMed contains all of MEDLINE (1966-present), PubMed in-process records (new citations not yet fully indexed) and some additional non-MEDLINE citations.

Keyword Searching - How it works

PubMed uses an Automatic Term Mapping feature to search for keywords. When you type a word and click Go, PubMed will look for a match in up to four lists. It looks first for a match in the MeSH Translation Table (see Subject Searching with the MeSH Index below). If it doesn't find a match, it looks in the Journals Translation Table, then in the Phrase List, and finally in the Author Index.

In brief, this means that if you search for *asthma* PubMed will find records where the word *asthma* occurs, and also any records indexed as being about *asthma*.

PubMed automatically combines search words with the Boolean term *and* (see below). This means that if you search for *asthma inhaler* PubMed will search for each term and then display only those records where each term is present.

Search Tip: Although PubMed automatically adds the Boolean term *and* between keywords, it is often better to enter each concept as a separate search and then combine each search (see Search History overleaf).

Combining Keywords (Boolean Operators)

You may choose a connector word to combine keywords - these are AND, OR, NOT.
If you type AND the subject is narrowed e.g. salmonella AND eggs.
If you type OR it will widen your choice e.g. cat OR cats OR feline.
If you type NOT it will remove articles with unwanted keywords e.g. cats NOT dogs.

Combining words - AND OR NOT **must always be entered in CAPITAL letters**.

Search Tip: Use "" to search for a phrase for example "DNA fingerprinting"

Truncation

In PubMed the trucation symbol is * for example:
pollut* will find pollution or polluted etc.
asthma* will find asthma or asthmatic etc.

Search History and Combining Searches

The *History* option allows you to combine searches. Type in the search numbers separated by AND or OR, e.g. #1 AND #2.

Combine with AND to find references with both concepts (fewer results).
Combine with OR to find references with either concept (more results).

Limiting your search

Use the *Limit* option to restrict the results of your search, e.g. by date, by language, by publication type, by journal subset etc.

Displaying Results

The search results are listed below the latest search and are displayed in Summary format. To change the display format choose an option from the drop-down menu and click *Display*.

Click on the authors names (in blue text) to display the full record.

To mark a record, tick the box next to it. To add the marked record(s) to the clipboard select *Clipboard* from the drop-down menu and click the *Send* to button (make sure you do this before moving on to the next page of results). Click on *Clipboard* to view the records you have added to the clipboard.

Use the *Related articles* option to broaden your search to articles on the same topic – PubMed does this by comparing words from the title, the abstract and the MeSH terms.

Printing, Saving or Emailing Results

Select the required output option from the drop down menu and click *Send To*.
To Print – select *Text* from the menu and use your Web browser print option.
To Save – select *File* (it is best to save the file as a text file - .txt).
To email results to yourself – select *E-mail*.

Subject searching with the MeSH index

PubMed indexes using a hierarchical thesaurus of controlled Medical Subject Headings (known as MeSH), used to ensure consistency and precision.

The *MeSH Database* enables you to find the most relevant MeSH for your search and means that you do not have to think of synonyms to describe your subject. E.g. enter *neuroleptic drugs* in the search box and you are directed to the MeSH *antipsychotic agents*. Click the box beside the MeSH heading to select it and click the *Send to* button (use the default drop down option). The next screen will display the MeSH heading you have selected - click Search PubMed to complete the search.

Single citation matcher

An exceptionally useful feature allowing you to retrieve an article about which you have very little information, e.g. only the author and the first page number of the article. Simply fill in as much information as you have and click *Search*.

Clinical queries & Systematic reviews

This option is designed to help clinicians run a search using pre-set search filters. There is a filter to retrieve systematic reviews and meta-analysis studies for a particular search topic(s). Another filter offers specialized searches in four study categories: therapy, diagnosis, etiology, and prognosis. The emphasis may be more sensitive (i.e., more relevant articles but probably some less relevant ones) or more specific (i.e., very relevant articles but probably omiting a few).

Cubby

Set up a free account and store your search strategy to be repeated at a later date.