General PubMed Search Tips

Tips	Why?
Author search format: LAST FM [au] Example: ***Disis ML [au]***	• First names are included in PubMed only for references added since 2002. • Greatest accurate retrieval using last name and 2 initials.
Title search: use the code [ti] Example: ***fissure sealants [ti]***	• Good way to narrow your list of results if you don't need to be comprehensive.
Truncation symbol: * Example: ***isolat**** (Retrieves Isolate, Isolated, Isolating, Isolation…)	• Allow for different forms of a word, such as plurals or different verb tenses. • Note: Using the asterisk prevents PubMed from automatically translating your search to MeSH terms.
Combine terms using AND, OR, NOT (capitalized) Example: ***(pharmacogenetics OR pharmacogenomics) AND hepatitis C***	• Include synonyms with "OR." • Tell PubMed where one concept ends and another begins by using "AND."
Apply Filters Common filters appear to the left and the right of search results. Click "Show additional filters" to see all options. Can be customized in My NCBI.	• Narrow your search by language, publication date, full-text availability, and article type (clinical trial, review).
Search Details Box on the right side of the search results page shows how your search strategy was interpreted by PubMed.	• Identify useful MeSH terms. • See what went wrong if your search results are not what you expected.
Use the UW Libraries' Guide to PubMed	• http://guides.lib.uw.edu/hsl/pubmed

One-Time Tasks for Long-Term Benefit

Tips	Why?
Set up a My NCBI account https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK3843/toc	• See links to your institution's full-text journal articles. • Set up email alerts. • Create collections of references. • Customize filters & site preferences • Use My Bibliography to manage your publications for NIH funding compliance.
Configure Husky OnNet to Access UW-licensed resources from off campus. http://www.lib.washington.edu/help/connect/husky-onnet	• If Husky OnNet is configured for "all internet traffic," when you're off campus, you can connect to any UW-restricted resource as if you are on campus.

Strategies for Advanced PubMed Searchers

Tips	Why?
Only Have a Minute? Search for words you'd see in a "dream title." Then sort results by "Best Match."	• The "Best Match" algorithm helps you find a few highly relevant references quickly. [Sorting by Publication Date is also available.]
Steps for Building a Thorough Search Strategy 1. Find 2 or 3 good references and see what MeSH terms were used to describe them. 2. Build a strategy using MeSH terms along with individual words or phrases as needed. 3. Apply filters such as "clinical trials," "review," or a date range.	• By starting with 2 or 3 good references, you can find more like them. • Using MeSH terms for key concepts will retrieve more relevant references. • Refine your search by adding MeSH terms, your own words, or by applying filters until you get a reasonable number of relevant references.
Identify MeSH (Medical Subject Heading) terms using the <u>MeSH database</u> or a relevant reference. Example: ***Antibodies, Monoclonal [mesh]*** Finds references on monoclonal antibodies in general and specifically named mAbs, e.g., trastuzumab (Herceptin). Example: ***Cohort Studies [mesh]*** Finds references on various types of cohort studies, e.g., longitudinal & prospective studies.	• Zero in on references where your topic is a significant focus of the article. • MeSH terms let you include several related terms under one umbrella term. • Combine two or more MeSH terms to narrow your search. • Note: The most recently added references may not yet be indexed with MeSH terms.
Use MeSH Subheadings if appropriate Example: ***HIV Infections/prevention and control[mesh]***	• When selcting a MeSH term, you can further limit your search to a particular aspect of that subject, e.g., "economics," "drug therapy," or "epidemiology."
Phrase searching Enclose a phrase in quotation marks. Example: ***"medical home"*** Example: ***"single cell"***	• Useful if there is no good MeSH term. • Also useful for locating very recent, unindexed references. • Only retrieves references where your exact phrase is used. • NOT comprehensive. Only works for <u>selected</u> frequently-occurring phrases.
Advanced Search mode for modifying, combining, or excluding past searches. Also offers a "fill-in-the-blank" search interface. Example: ***#5 NOT #3*** [if you looked at the results from search #3]	• Exclude references you've already reviewed. • Try different combinations and modifications of past searches. • Build a strategy using pull-down menus.