Ovid MEDLINE: Basics

Take a Class

The Galter Library teaches a related class called Basic Ovid MEDLINE. See our Classes schedule for the next available offering. If this class is not on our upcoming schedule, it is still available to you or your group by request.

Getting Started

Produced by the National Library of Medicine, MEDLINE is the premier database for medicine and allied health fields. Over 5,000 journals are indexed, from 1946 to the present. MEDLINE covers the fields of biomedicine, dentistry, nursing and allied health. Ovid is a company through which we access several biomedical databases, one of which is MEDLINE. PubMed is another means to access the MEDLINE data. For the most part, PubMed and Ovid MEDLINE access the same citations, so there is no need to search both.

Sign in to the library website first to guarantee access to all full-text resources linked from Ovid MEDLINE.

- Go to the Library homepage at: http://www.galter.northwestern.edu/
- From the Popular Links menu at left, choose Ovid MEDLINE

Search Options in OvidSP

The default search in Ovid is Advanced Search which allows for MeSH term mapping and the selection of MeSH subheadings. The search examples outlined below illustrate how to search using Advanced Search.

There are six different search options in Ovid.
Basic Search uses Ovid's natural language searching algorithm. If you use this natural language search, it's a good idea to check the box labeled Include Related Terms to be sure that synonyms are included in your search. If you want more control and accuracy, you should use the Advanced Ovid Search tab.

With Find Citation you can enter information about a specific reference (e.g. author name, journal title, etc.) to retrieve that reference. You'll find this similar in functionality to PubMed Single Citation Manager.

Search Tools provides a number of tools to help you create better searches.

Search Fields provides you with the option to search within specific fields of a database record (e.g. author name, institution name, gene symbol, grant number, etc.).

Advanced Search is the default search. The Advanced Search allows you to construct more precise searches by using Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and subheadings. The remainder of this guide discusses searching using the Advanced Ovid Search.

Multi-Field Search enables you to search multiple fields at one time.

Formulating a Subject Search

1. Before entering information into the search box, it is a good idea to formulate your search topic in a logical manner. One way to do this is to state your information need in the form of a question or a statement, e.g. "How effective is heparin in reducing complications from heart attacks in patients over 65 years of age?"
2. Break your question into individual parts: heart attack, heparin, age over 65
3. Perform a search on each of the individual topics (leave the age topic until you apply limits).
4. Combine the topics together; apply limits, if necessary.
5. Evaluate the results to see if they answer your original question.

Performing a Subject Search

Mapping to Medical Subject Headings (MeSH)

MEDLINE uses a language called Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) to index the articles in the database. MeSH terms provide a way to search all articles on a topic by using one phrase to describe a particular topic. For example, the MeSH term "lung neoplasms" is used for searching all of the following: lung cancer, pulmonary cancer, pulmonary neoplasms, cancer of the lung. It is easier to use the one MeSH term than to try to think of all the possibilities for lung cancer.

If the mapping works effectively, you don't need to know the exact MeSH term. Entering a variant term such as "lung cancer" should pull up its MeSH equivalent. However, there will be occasions where the mapping doesn't work as
expected or there is no MeSH equivalent. There is always the option to search for a term as a keyword in the title, abstract, and MeSH terms.

1. Be sure to use the **Advanced Search** tab (this is the default search for Northwestern University’s version of Ovid).
2. Enter a single topic on the **Enter keyword or phrase** line.
3. Be sure that **Map Term to Subject Heading** is checked (usually checked by default).
4. Click **Search**.
5. Click on the MeSH term to see where it fits in the MeSH tree, a hierarchical list of terms. The MeSH tree shows you the context of the heading in relation to broader and more specific headings to help you narrow down your topic. Terms in the tree go from more general (left) to more specific (right).

1. Click on the ![icon] to see a definition of the MeSH term.
2. Check the **Expand** box to retrieve citations using the selected term and all of its more specific terms (those that are indented below the main term).
3. Check the **Focus** box to limit your search to those documents in which your subject heading is considered to be the major point of the article.
4. Check the box or boxes you want to include in your search and click **at the top of the screen. On the next page, you can choose **Subheadings**.

### Subheadings

Click the box in front of **Include All Subheadings** if you want all articles on your topic. If you want to limit your search to particular aspects of a topic, select the appropriate subheadings.
Repeat the search process above for all of your search terms.

To combine search statements, check the terms you'd like to combine and click Combine selections with 'And' or 'OR'. Alternatively, you can type the set numbers separated with 'AND' or 'Or', e.g. 1 and 2 - this will retrieve articles containing both the results from sets 1 and 2.

Limiting a Search
Click **Limits** to quickly limit your search retrieval to articles in English, published within specific years, etc. Quick limits are available on the main search page while additional limits can also be selected. On the “Additional Limits” screen, clicking the information icon beside each limit will explain what that limit does.

### Reviewing Results

There are several options available for displaying references within Ovid.

- To view the abstract for a specific reference, click on **View Abstract** at the bottom of the reference.
- To view abstracts for every reference in your results list, select **Abstract** at the top of your result set.
- Use the pull-down menu on the upper right side of the screen to change the number of results displayed.
- Click on **Complete Reference** to see the entire record, including MeSH terms (this will not show the full text of the article).
- Where **Full Text** links are available, you can display and print full articles.
- Click on **Library Holdings** to search NUcat to determine whether the library owns a journal in print or electronically.
- Clicking **Find it@NU** will open a new page where you can find out whether the full text article is available online, search NUcat for the journal, or order the article through interlibrary loan.
- Click **Add to My Projects** to save your citations to a personal workspace within Ovid. An Ovid personal account is required for this feature.

**Find Similar** retrieves citations that contain related words and synonyms in their titles.
Find Citing Articles retrieves citations that have cited the chosen article within the Journals@Ovid collection. Note: For a more thorough citation analysis, try a cited reference search in Web of Science/Web of Knowledge. Click Next to see subsequent records in your list.

It is advisable to use the navigation buttons within Ovid to move between pages. Using the back button of your browser may result in expired pages and you will lose your work!

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### Printing, Saving, and E-Mailing Citations

The most effective way to print, save or e-mail your records is to review the list of records first and select those you want to keep. Select the articles you want by placing a checkmark in the box in front of the record. When you have finished selecting your records, use the output options above your search results, to print, e-mail, or export the records.

[Print] [Email] [Export] [Add to My Projects]

Depending on which output option you choose, a pop-up window with a number of options will appear. The Print, Email, and Export options allow you to select how much information you want to include. Your choices are: Citation, Citation + Abstract, Citation + Abstract + Subject Headings, or Complete Reference (Complete Reference does not include full-text. To print full-text, choose the Full-text link next to the citation in the results list, where available).

Both Print and Email allow you to select how you would like the citation(s) to be formatted such as AMA, APA, Chicago style or others.

The Export option allows you to export the citation(s) to Word, a PDF, or to a choice of citation managers such as EndNote or Reference Manager. For further instructions on direct export to EndNote, see the relevant section of the EndNote Basics guide.

Add to My Projects allows you to create work projects and organize all of your research materials—individual articles, search strategies, images, and more—into a dedicated area. While you’re not limited to materials you find in Ovid, you will need an Ovid Personal Account to access these tools.

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**Saving a Search Strategy**
It is also possible to save searches to the Ovid server. You will then be able to re-run those searches at another time. A personal Ovid account is required for this feature.

At the bottom of your search history is a **Save Search History** button. It will not appear until you have performed at least one search in Ovid.

When you save a search history, you will be prompted to log into your personal Ovid account or create an account at that time. You can have more than one Ovid account (e.g. you may want to have one for your own searches and one that several people can access for collaboration).

**View Saved**: Located in the upper right corner, this link allows you to access searches you have previously saved.

### Help

All of the help links for Ovid are located in the upper right corner of the screen.

- **My Account** gives you access to your personal Ovid account which includes your Workspace, My Projects, eTOCs, saved searches and alerts.
- **Ask a Librarian** opens a form on which you can submit your questions to librarians at Galter Library.
- The **Help** link displays context-sensitive help. For instance, if you are searching within the Advanced Search tab and click on help, the resulting screen will explain how to search using the Advanced Search.

### Related Videos and Tutorials

The following related videos are available on the Ovid website (flash player is required; turn up the volume of your speakers):

- [Advanced Ovid Search overview](#) (5 min.)
Additional tutorials and training opportunities are also available.