**Search strategy (concepts / block building approach)**

* Take your research question and break it into different concepts (“building blocks”). For therapy questions, the PICO-S/T framework is useful.
* Start with the most important two concepts and only add other concepts if the number of results is too large)
* Use study type or time limits only if absolutely necessary

**Topic / Research Question:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**PubMed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Concept 1: | *Subject Heading [MeSH]*  **OR**  *Textwords [Title/Abstract]* |
| **AND** | |
| Concept 2: | *Subject Heading [MeSH]*  **OR**  *Textwords [Title/Abstract]* |
| **AND** | |
| Concept 3: | *Subject Heading [MeSH]*  **OR**  *Textwords [Title/Abstract]* |
| **AND** | |
| Limits/Filters: Study type |  |

**Developing Search Terms**

The [Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions](https://training.cochrane.org/handbook/current/)suggests searches should comprise a combination of subject terms selected from the **controlled vocabulary** or thesaurus (‘exploded' where appropriate) with a wide range of **free-text terms**in order to identify as many relevant records as possible searches.  
These free-text terms will be searched as textwords (words in title, abstract, author keywords).

**Limits/Filters**

Whenever filters are necessary, use **validated methodological filters**!

* **Cochrane Search Filter for RCTs:**<https://work.cochrane.org/pubmed>
* **UTHealth (School of Public Health, University of Texas)**<https://libguides.sph.uth.tmc.edu/search_filters/pubmed_filters>
* **SIGN (Healthcare Improvement Scotland)**<https://www.sign.ac.uk/what-we-do/methodology/search-filters/>
* **ISSG Search Filters Resource (York)**<https://sites.google.com/a/york.ac.uk/issg-search-filters-resource/home>

**On-going trials**

Don’t forget the Clinical Trials Registries

<https://www.clinicaltrials.gov/>