**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:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Ovid Medline / Ovid Embase**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Concept 1: | *Subject Heading (MeSH/Emtree Terms)*  **OR**  *Textwords (.ti,ab,kw = title, abstract, author keyword)* |
| **AND** | |
| Concept 2: | *Subject Heading [MeSH/Emtree Terms]*  **OR**  *Textwords (.ti,ab,kw)* |
| **AND** | |
| Concept 3: | *Subject Heading [MeSH/Emtree Terms]*  **OR**  *Textwords (.ti,ab,kw)* |
| **AND** | |
| Limits/Filters: Study type |  |

**Developing Search Terms**

The [Cochrane Handbook, 4.4.4](https://training.cochrane.org/handbook/current/chapter-04#section-4-4-4) 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).

* If you use keywords only, you could miss articles that do not use your precise terms.
* If you use controlled vocabulary only, you could miss articles that have not been indexed yet or have older indexing.

**Limits/Filters**

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

* **ISSG Search Filters Resource (York)**<https://sites.google.com/a/york.ac.uk/issg-search-filters-resource/home>
* **SIGN (Healthcare Improvement Scotland)**<https://www.sign.ac.uk/what-we-do/methodology/search-filters/>

Specific information regarding **Ovid Filters**:

* **Ovid Tools & Resources**<https://tools.ovid.com/ovidtools/expertsearches.html>
* MEDLINE 2021 Database Guide  
  <https://ospguides.ovid.com/OSPguides/medline.htm#limits>

**On-going trials**

Don’t forget the Clinical Trials Registries

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