



How does Basic Search work?

With Basic Search, simply enter a search term or ask a question in ordinary, everyday English terms and click Search. There's no need to use special searching syntax rules (boolean terms), search conventions, or complicated search strategies.

1. OvidSP filters the terms of your query, eliminating irrelevant noise words and tightening word choices into validated search terms and phrases. Here is an example.

YOUR SEARCH QUERY	OVIDSP VALIDATED TERMS/PHRASES
weather related migraine	weather migraine

2. OvidSP uses a proprietary medical lexicon (drawn from the Unified Medical Language System [UMLS] Meta-thesaurus, medical dictionaries and thesauri, medical acronyms, drug and disease names, and standard American and British English dictionaries) to expand validated terms to include:

- Word variations
- Strong synonyms (such as alternate names of drugs or diseases)
- Acronyms
- Alternative spellings (such as those that occur between British and American English)

3. OvidSP then analyzes your original query to identify the nouns, noun phrases, and adjectives that shape the topics of your query, and incorporate them into an overall, expanded search strategy. For example, a Natural Language search for weather related migraines would expand to include the following terms from the lexicon:

OVID-VALIDATED TERMS	TERMS EXPANDED FROM LEXICON
weather	weathers
migraine	migraine, hemicrania, migraines, anencephalies partial, anencephaly hemicranial, anencephaly incomplete, anencephaly partial, headache migraine, headaches migraine, hemicranial anencephaly, incomplete anencephaly, incomplete anencephaly hemicrania, migraine headache, migraine headaches, migraine unspecified, partial anencephalies, partial anencephaly

4. OvidSP then executes searches using these expansions and compiles all findings into a single results set on the Main Search Page.

Best Practices in Basic Search

The tips below are a good guide to helping you get the search results you're looking for quickly and easily.

- State your query as concisely as possible. Try not to use unnecessary modifiers such as "really big ecg changes in advanced hypokalaemia."
- Use nouns more than verbs.
- Do not "force phrasing" by imposing quotation marks, parenthesis, or hyphens within your query. For example, if you enter weather-related you lose all expansions on the word weather because Ovid perceives the hyphenated phrase as a single term that has no possible expansions.
- Avoid spelling errors by keeping the Check Spelling box pre-selected.
- Use only free text or ordinary, everyday English terms.
- Don't search with negatives - eg informed consent for medical procedures but not with psychiatric patients
- Expect approximately 500 relevancy-ranked results; however, occasionally you will see more when articles have the same rank.

Relevance Ranking of Results

The NLP-based Basic Search [natural language processing] was designed to find the most relevant results, not all results. Since some searches could return an almost infinite set of results, the system has a manageable cut-off point of 500 results ranked by relevancy.

Each search result is assigned a score based on its relevancy to the search query and all results with the same score are grouped together. The number of groups (let's call them "Scoring Groups") varies depending on the number of results that are assigned the same score. We stop after the first group that brings the total result count past 500. If that group is large, the ending count may be a lot higher than 500.

Example:

The query "computed tomography" returns 900 equally relevant results in MEDLINE. The query doesn't provide much information, so the system can't whittle the result down to the 500 or so that it prefers to return; all 900 results are equally relevant, so they're all returned.






When you run a search from the Basic Search tab, OvidSP uses natural language processing (NLP) to retrieve results. In the Search Results Display, OvidSP ranks results records by relevancy to the Basic Search that produced them.

The screenshot shows the OvidSP search results interface. At the top, there are options to "Customize Display" and "Reset Display". Below this, there are checkboxes for "View All Abstracts", a "Sort By" dropdown menu set to "SCORE", and a "Results Per Page" dropdown set to "11". A purple arrow points from the "Sort By" dropdown to the text "display sorted by ranked scores". The search results are displayed under the heading "Results of your search: treatments for childhood obesity {No Related Terms}". Below this, there are options to "Viewing 1-11 of 483 Results", "Go to #:" with a "GO" button, and "Next Result" with a right arrow. The first result is highlighted with a red circle around its "Score: ★★★★★" and a purple circle around the "SCORE" dropdown. The result text is: "1. Mathur P. Das MK. Arora NK. Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and childhood obesity. [Review] [32 refs] [Journal Article. Review] *Indian Journal of Pediatrics*. 74(4):401-7, 2007 Apr. UI: 17476088 Authors Full Name Mathur, Prashant. Das, Manoj K. Arora, Narendra K. View Abstract Find Similar Find Citing Articles". The second result is also highlighted with a red circle around its "Score: ★★★★★". The result text is: "2. Wardle J. Understanding the aetiology of childhood obesity: implications for treatment. [Review] [66 refs] [Journal Article. Review] *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*. 64(1):73-9, 2005 Feb. UI: 15877925 Authors Full Name Wardle, Jane. View Abstract Find Similar Find Citing Articles".



Only the records of Basic Search results get ranked.

By default, OvidSP lists best-ranked records first in the display, providing a visual qualification of each record's relevance to your search term(s).

-  All search concepts are present and complete.
-  All search concepts are present, but some are incomplete.
-  One concept is missing from the record.
-  Two concepts are missing from the record.
-  More than two search concepts are missing from the record.

OvidSP ranks records in the results display based upon the following criteria.

- Count:** How many search concepts appear in the record.
- Frequency:** How often concepts occur in the record.
- Importance:** How rare the terms are in the database.
- Cohesion:** Whether or not terms within phrases occur closely together.
- Vocabulary Level:** Closeness of a record's language to your word choices rather than to variants and synonyms.

Why was 500 chosen as the cutoff point for Basic Search results?

Based on extensive end-user research, it has been found that users who are looking for the most relevant articles to their query—rather than doing an exhaustive literature search—rarely look at more than 100 results before accepting what they have, refining their search, or trying a new search. On the other hand, searchers want to have a sufficient amount of results. Based on this research, it was determined that five hundred is an appropriate set of results for Basic Search.

Some final take-home messages on OvidSP

OvidSP's basic search should not be used as you would use the classic Ovid interface.

Do NOT seek to build a search by combining sets. If you want to search in this way, use the Ovid Syntax search or contact your librarian to have a search done for you.

If your first basic search does not return the results you expected, simply try rephrasing your basic search terms to improve results.

Basic search is an enhanced Google type search experience. It improves on Google because it is backed by multiple thesauri and dictionaries to map your search words to other possible terminology. It performs an automatic Boolean 'AND' on search terms.

If you are having trouble finding the results you seek, remember the clickable link at the top of the screen - "Need help with your search? Send an email". The email will come through to the librarians (in Library opening times) who will either contact you to seek more information or run a search for you.