**Template Logbook ‘Searching for literature in PubMed’**

Use the LibGuide ‘A roadmap for searching for literature in PubMed’  
Access: Click on the following link or type it into your browser: <http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap>

1. **Research question**

**Explanation:** Research questions are often formulated broadly. Try to formulate your research question clearly. What do you want to know and how do you think you can get an answer to your question? Bear in mind your research question throughout the whole process (searching for literature, processing results and writing). Think critically about what you want to find out.

** Fill in: Research question**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. **Search elements**

**Explanation:** Divide your search questions into search aspects. You can use the Building Blocks method to tailor your search. For clinical queries, you can use the PICO framework. [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/aspects)]

The search query can also act as a good base for you: keep asking yourself whether the search strategy you are using is going to provide an answer to your question. Make a note of the elements you are going to use in the box below. Think of as many English synonyms as possible for each element.

** Fill in: search aspects**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Search aspect 1 | Search aspect 2 | Search aspect 3 |
| synonyms:  .....  ..... | ......... |  |

**3. Databases**

**Explanation:** Which databases are you going to use for your search? PubMed is often the first choice of database, but there are other databases you can use to find evidence on your research topic. [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/databases)]   
 ** Fill in: relevant databases**

|  |
| --- |
| Databases |
| PubMed |
| .... |
| ... |

**4. Search strategy for PubMed**

**Explanation:** Construct a search strategy to use for each database. PubMed is a good database to start with. When you find a strategy that is effective, translate the query to use it in other databases.

1. **MeSH terms**

**Explanation:** Start by looking for keywords related to your research topic. [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/MeSH)]

** Fill in: MeSH terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect 1: | MeSH term 1 OR MeSH term 2 OR ... [number of mesh-terms differs] |
| Aspect 2: | MeSH term 1 |
| Aspect 3: | MeSH term 1 OR MeSH term 2 |

1. **Free text terms [tiab]**

**Explanation:** Think of as many terms as possible that may appear in the title or abstract of an article, and search for them using the fieldcode [tiab]. [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/tiab)].

**Fill in: tiab terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect 1: | term1[tiab] OR term2[tiab] OR |
| Aspect 2: | term1[tiab] OR term2[tiab] OR term3[tiab] OR |
| Aspect 3: | …. [tiab] OR |
| (Aspect 4:) | … |

1. **Truncation and Phrase searching  
   Explanation:** These are techniques that you can use to make your search more effective. Experiment with the options. For example, how does using an asterisk (\*) in a word affect the search? [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/tools)]

**** Look at your tiab terms above. Use the truncation and phrase options to your terms. Look at the results. Is it useful? **Adjust the terms in the tiab terms-box.**

1. **Combining**

**Explanation:** You are now going to combine the terms you have found. Combine the MeSH terms and [tiab] terms for each element in the search box.

Don’t forget to use Boolean operators: Use **OR** to combine MeSH and [tiab] terms within one aspect. Use **AND** between different aspects. [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/combining)]

**Fill in: combination of MeSH-terms or tiab terms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect 1: | ...[Mesh] OR …[tiab] OR …[tiab] OR …[tiab] |
| Aspect 2: | …[Mesh] OR …\*[tiab] OR “… …”[tiab] OR …[tiab] |
| Aspect 3: | …[Mesh] OR …\*[tiab] OR “… …”[tiab] OR …[tiab] |

1. **Advanced Search**

**Explanation:** Combine your search in the Advanced Search Builder in PubMed [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/combining)]

**** Go to the **Advanced Search Builder**. Click on **Edit** and Copy/paste search query 1. Click on ‘Add to history’. You will find the query and results in the **Search History**. Repeat the steps for your other aspects.

Combine your searches: Click on Edit and type #1 AND #2 AND #3. [use the right numbers from your search history]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Search | Query | Items found |
| #1 | your Aspect 1 |  |
| #2 | your Aspect 2 |  |
| #3 | your Aspect 3 |  |
| #4 | Combine the 3 searches: type: #1 AND #2 AND #3 |  |

**f. Filters**  
**Explanation:** Look at the results of the combined search. It is a good idea to apply a filter if your search generates a large amount of hits. You may, for example, want to apply the clinical queries filter [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/filters)]

**Modified search with filter:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Search | Query | Items found |
| #1 | Aspect 1 |  |
| #2 | Aspect 2 |  |
| #3 | Aspect 3 |  |
| #4 | #1 AND #2 AND #3 |  |
| #5 | FILTER |  |
| #6 | #4 AND #5 |  |

**5. Search history**

**Explanation:** Copy and paste your search history from PubMed. Also see the example in: [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/combining)]  
  
**Copy and paste your search history here:**

**6. Evaluate your search**

**Explanation:** You usually have to carry out more than one search, as the initial search often generates either too few or too many results. You may also find that too many of the articles are not relevant to your topic. Return to your research question and make the necessary changes to your search using the tips [[help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/evaluating)].

**** **Fill in: adjusted search queries**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect 1 | .... |
| Aspect 2 |  |
| Aspect 2 |  |

**7. Search history final search**

**Explanation:** Perform the search again, with the changes you have made. Copy and paste your final search here. Are you satisfied with the results?

**Copy/ paste the final search in your logbook.**

**8. TIP: Export the results into a reference management program**  
**Explanation:** good reference managing applications are EndNote or Mendeley[free]. They can help you organize your references and cite them right in Word. [[help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/references)]

**9. Translate the PubMed search for other databases**

**Explanation:** Each database uses different keywords. You will need to search your MeSH terms in the thesaurus or glossary of each database. The ways in which you can search, and the use of [tiab] may also differ. Tip: Look at the help pages of these databases for search instructions. [[help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/database)]

**Use this logbook to document your search strategies and copy paste your search histories for other databases.**

**10. Document the number of hits for all databases**

**Explanation**: When you have used more than one database, it is a List the databases you use, including the number of hits and the search date, in your logbook. You will need these details to justify your methods when you write your article or thesis. [[Help LG](http://libguides.vu.nl/PMroadmap/databases)]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Databases | Number of Hits | Search date |
| **C:\Users\lse640\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\038JJDW9\664px-Men_at_work_sign_(green).svg[1].png** PubMed |  |  |
| .... |  |  |
| ... |  |  |
| Total |  |  |