

This is a Brief Online Learning Tutorial (or BOLT) brought to you by the LISTEN project, a HRSA-funded project focused on improving the information literacy competencies of nursing students and professional nurses.



**This BOLT will focus on developing skills to be a good searcher.** Searching for the best evidence and the most accurate and reliable information in the clinical setting takes practice. Once you get used to efficiently and effectively searching for information, you will find yourself accessing evidence-based information quicker and more easily. Your patients will benefit from your evidence-based nursing practice.

## Search More than One Database

Use multiple databases in your search. These databases will cover most of the health care literature:


- PubMed/MEDLINE
- Cochrane Database
- CINAHL
- EMBASE
- PsychINFO



The best way to become a good searcher is to incorporate searching principles into your daily routine and, of course, to practice, practice, practice. This presentation will give you tried and true rules of thumb that experienced searchers often tell **others about**, but rarely write down. For example, good searchers often search multiple databases, not just PubMed/MEDLINE or CINAHL. No one database has complete coverage, and all of them have something to offer, so becoming familiar with them and **realizing that** using more than one is a good searching rule of thumb.

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## Additional Tips for Searching



- Extend (or reduce) the years of your search
- Find a key article and work backwards
- Avoid AND NOT (“NOTing” out words)
- Make sure you know the definitions of the terms you are using
- Use a combination of textword and index terms
- Use author searching, study names (GISSI, GUSTO), locations, drug manufacturers or products

Here are some additional basic principles **for being a good searcher**:

- Use the limits function of your database interface to customize your search. For example extending (or reducing) the years of your search. The limits function will also let you restrict to language, sex (**gender**), age, and other factors that may influence the results of your search.
- If you are stuck or if completeness is important, consider getting **other** people together to do the same search. Two heads are often better than one.
- Another trick is to find a key article that is exactly what you want, then to find it in one or more databases. Find out how the database indexed that article and use those index terms to find more articles similar to the key article.
- Avoid using the Boolean operator NOT (or AND NOT) in your searches. More often than not, using this operator will eliminate articles that **may be** of interest to you.
- It may seem obvious, but make sure that you know the definitions of the terms that you are using.
- The best results often come from the use of both index terms and textwords. Index terms are the most efficient way of searching any database, but textwords are useful when searching for new discoveries or products, or things that have received little or no discussion in the literature.
- Finally, when it is appropriate, don't be afraid to use authors' names, study acronyms (like GUSTO for **Global Utilization of Strategies to Open occluded arteries**), locations, or manufacturers of products or drugs.

## Textword Searching

Keep these things in mind:

- ✓ Alternate spellings
- ✓ Use terms of similar meaning
- ✓ Terminology differences across disciplines and nationalities
- ✓ Differences in historical naming
- ✓ Short forms for terms, like study names
- ✓ Brand and generic names



Textword searching is widely used, and often is the first thing searchers do when beginning a search, so it deserves some special attention. Here are some things to keep in mind that will help you be a better textword searcher. Watch out for spelling errors. Computers are smart, but they don't always catch our mistakes, so double check your spelling. Also, look for synonyms that could be useful. There is often more than one way to say the same thing, and you have to try to think what those different forms of expression might be. Terms frequently change when you cross disciplines or borders. In the U.S. "acetaminophen" is a commonly used generic drug name, but in England and Europe the same drug is called paracetamol. Terms can also change meaning over time. If you are using study acronyms, such as GUSTO in the previous slide, keep in mind that using the words represented by the acronym could also be helpful. Finally, keep the difference between generic and brand names for drugs in mind. Most databases, like PubMed/MEDLINE, will give you very poor results if you only use the brand name and not the generic.

## Golden Rule for Good Searchers

Keep track of what you have done:

- Include search strategy on all printouts
- Write down the databases you have searched and the terms that you used in those databases



Along with practicing and making searching a part of your regular routine, **perhaps the** most important rule is to write down or to print what you have done. Very few of us have perfect recall, so recording what **databases** you searched and what terms you used can be very helpful. You will most likely search an important question more than once, so remembering to write down or to print the name of the **databases** you searched, **the dates of your search**, and the terms you used will make you a more efficient searcher and make better use of your time. It will also provide you with an opportunity to later review what you have done and to consider ways that you might improve your previous search. **Recording the date of your search will allow you to include a retrieval statement in a reference list if you develop a manuscript from your research.**

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For more information visit:  
<http://www.listenuphealth.org>

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 Learning Information Seeking and Technology for Evidence-based Nursing

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**LISTEN: Learning Information Seeking and Technology for Evidence-based Nursing practice**

Nurses with good information literacy competencies are able to provide evidence-based nursing practice resulting in positive patient outcomes. Most nurses, however, do not possess necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skills in information technology, nursing informatics, and information literacy.

Patients, and patient care, suffer!

Employers suffer!

Nurses suffer!

The Learning Information Seeking and Technology for Evidence-based Nursing practice (LISTEN) project is designed to improve information literacy competencies of student and professional nurses. We are doing this by preparing:

- a series of online learning modules,
- web-based resources, and
- interactive opportunities to learn more.

**Tip of the Week:**  
**Searching PubMed Using Author's Name and Subject**

View PubMed's tutorial on how to search for articles or abstracts by using an author's name and subject.

[Click here for Prior Tips of the Week!](#)

Continue to visit the LISTEN website, at [listenuphealth dot org](http://listenuphealth.org), for **other** helpful tips on using technology; and, seeking, evaluating, and applying information in nursing to support evidence-based nursing practice.

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